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[p.i. has no textual material]

[title page]

THE HAITIAN PEOPLE

BY

JAMES G. LEYBURN

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY
SIDNEY W. MINTZ

NEW HAVEN AND LONDON
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1966

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

[p. iv]

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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

[p. v]

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

By Sidney W. Mintz*

THE *Haitian People*, by James G. Leyburn, was first published 114 by the Yale University Press in 1941. The author, a sociologist, 121 sought to provide his readers with a "connected story of the growth of . . . [Haiti's] social institutions out of the backgrounds of slavery and French colonial life . . . [and] of the slow shaping of these institutions through the nineteenth century" (p. v). Asserting that a people's past is an essential aspect of the full understanding of their present, Leyburn wasted no time in arguments over the disciplinary affiliation of his research results: "Whether the book be classified as social history or as sociology is largely a matter of indifference, for the line between these subjects can hardly be drawn without doing violence to comprehensive insight. To view a people with understanding in the characteristic setting of their institutions—marriage, religion, property arrangements, and the rest—one needs not only a description of their ways, but also a knowledge of how they came to be what they are" (p. vi).

The Haitian People enjoyed an immediate success. One of the very 114 few books to deal with that country's crucial century of isolation (1804–1915), it is distinguished by careful scholarship, restrained interpretation, and a refreshing modesty; in these regards it differs from nearly every modern work written on the Republic of Haiti. And although many excellent books and articles on Haitian life have appeared since 1941, anyone who wishes to get the best interpretive overview of the history and culture of that country is well advised to start with Leyburn's contribution.

When *The Haitian People* first appeared, it was given a warm and

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* Dr. Rémy Bastien, M. Leslie F. Manigat, Jacqueline Wei Mintz, and Mr. Michael G. Owen provided valuable critical help in the preparation of this introduction. The author of *The Haitian People*, Professor James G. Leyburn, encouraged me to undertake the writing of the introduction, and offered useful advice on its form and content. I am much indebted to all of these persons for their generous assistance, but they are in no way responsible for the interpretations I have made here.

114 very favorable reception by Haitian scholars and intellectuals. As its author and others have pointed out, few countries in modern times have received as bad a press at the hands of foreign observers as Haiti.
105 A small, rugged nation, born of an exhausting and destructive revolution, its people poor, disease-ridden, illiterate, and erratically led, independent Haiti gives the impression of having drifted aimlessly
110 for more than a century. Observers from "more developed" lands have had a field day—and still have—bemoaning the evil consequences of a mass of African slaves having turned on their French masters to destroy them and their works. It is still fashionable to allude to Haiti in deploring independence movements, racial desegregation, indigenous political leadership, and economic sovereignty.
114 But too little scholarship has since been invested, as Leyburn invested it, in delineating the national and international forces which have operated to keep Haiti poor and backward. Nor has contemporary research led to sufficiently revealing comparisons between the social history of Haiti and that of her more colonial neighbors in the Caribbean area. Leyburn's work enhanced the possibilities for such comparisons and drew some morals which Haiti's detractors often ignore; but in making his case, the author carefully avoids lapsing into romanticism, or into the inaccuracy born of uncritical sympathy.

The book was published as the final steps were being taken to end
175 the official United States presence in Haiti. The occupation had begun
648 in 1915, ostensibly to restore order in a situation marked by
[652] political chaos. Haitian defaulting on debts to the French and Germans had raised the specter of foreign—that is, European—occupation, which created considerable North American anxiety; and there were large Haitian debts outstanding to United States banks as well. When the United States decided to move militarily, the abstract issue of justice was ignored, to be raised for contemplation only after the occupation itself was a fact. Military occupation continued for nineteen years, and the complete termination of United States controls over the national affairs of Haiti did not come until 1946, long after Leyburn's book had appeared. Twenty-five years have now elapsed since Leyburn wrote, and the events of these years are relevant to any retrospective view of the author's interpretations.

175 Much, indeed, has happened in Haiti since 1941: the United States
105 withdrawal and the fading of the effects, both good and bad, of the occupation; the positive economic consequences for Haiti of World

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

War II and its aftermath, and the subsequent dissipation of those gains; the "social revolution" of January 1946, ushering in the Estimé regime; the boom in the arts and tourism, and their later contractions; the rise and subsequent fall of the Magloire government (1950–56), and the uneasy interregnum that followed it; and finally, the growth of the Duvalier monolith. 175 105

Over the span of those years, social science literature on Haiti has increased significantly, and outsiders, as well as the Haitians themselves, can now know much more about the country and its people. But some of the most important questions raised by Leyburn's book remain substantially unanswered. *The Haitian People* is a classic because its author phrased so well the major issues in the growth of Haitian national institutions, and no subsequent work is likely to supplant it in this regard. But its value has been heightened over the years by the lack of any equally penetrating analysis dealing with the period since 1941 or specifying the relative importance of various institutional forces in the contemporary structure of Haitian society. Thus, for instance, much too little is known of the culture and social organization of Haiti's predominantly rural population, in spite of considerable anthropological research since 1941. More detailed studies of the rural economy are particularly necessary, both to assess developmental possibilities and to understand better the relationship of rural sectors to the national economy. Sociological and economic analyses of folk religion—*vodoun*—are wanting, even though psychological and descriptive studies of this religion have appeared in large numbers. The general conceptual problem of community definition, structure, and organization, which has long plagued students in the Caribbean area, has been barely raised in the case of rural Haiti. Finally, our understanding of Haitian class structure, both local and national, and its corollaries in economic, political, and social institutions, is still slight. Here the need for more research seems particularly acute, since no adequate grasp of the nature of Haitian society at large will be possible until the fit of the rural sectors with the national class structure is better known. On this understanding, among others, may hinge the likelihood of success of any future developmental effort in Haiti. 114 121

It was with Haiti as a nation that Leyburn dealt in his book, and his analysis of national institutions and social structure excited more comment and reflection within Haiti itself than any other part of his

114 treatment. In the absence of sufficient analytic material on the intervening
121 years since his book was written, a prefatory note such as this
can do little more than comment on Haitian society, either in terms
of its present design or in terms of the recent events that may have
modified it.

121
114 The central thesis of Leyburn's book is that Haitian society is sharply
565 divided into two segments, and that the national institutional structure
[178] is such that no significant alteration in that division has occurred
in the entire course of Haiti's history as a sovereign nation. At the
base of the society is the rural agricultural sector, making up perhaps
as much as 95 per cent of the population; at the top the elite, which
dominates the governmental apparatus and all national institutions.
These two segments of the society differ, in Leyburn's view, in all
important regards: level of income, source of income, education,
language, religion, social forms, values and attitudes, and all else. By
carefully describing the history of Haitian society from the eve of the
revolution until the midst of the United States occupation, he reveals
both the origin of this vast social cleavage and the various means employed
for its perpetuation. Leyburn was so impressed by the gap
which separated yeomanry and elite that he chose to label these social
segments castes rather than classes. Members of the elite earn their
livings as rentiers, merchants, professionals, and in government, and
never engage in manual labor of any sort. They are predominantly
urban in residence; their sons attend private lower schools, and then
[191] go on to higher education, usually abroad. They are French-speaking,
[197] although they also speak Creole, Haiti's national language. Elite religion
[58] is Catholicism, elite forms of marriage and domestic organization
[59] are "legitimate" and "western." Elite members view themselves
[829] as a kind of aristocracy, and feel little commonality in their sharing of
Haiti and of Haitian history with the yeomen.

114 In sharp contrast, the yeomanry is rural, poor, works the land, is
565 illiterate and Creole-speaking only, believes in *vodoun* rather than in
191 orthodox Catholicism, usually marries by common law and is sometimes
771 polygynous, and remains substantially isolated from the outer
583 world. Finally and importantly—though its particular significance is
595 changing—the elite differs from the rural sector in that the countryman
144 is predominantly negroid in phenotype, while members of the
elite are prevailingly lighter-skinned.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Leyburn noted that the United States occupation affected the na- 114
ture and rigidity of the barriers separating the yeomanry from the 565
elite. For instance, he calls attention to the fact that the presidents 648
elected during the United States occupation were light-skinned mem- 643
bers of the elite. It seemed almost inevitable that, when the North 175
Americans sought men through whom to prosecute their plans for
"stabilizing" Haiti, they would settle on educated and worldly politicians, men who were both sufficiently trained and sufficiently pliant for the task. That these men were predominantly light-skinned was a corollary aspect of Haitian social history. In this way Washington played some part in reinforcing and expanding elite power; and herein lies a paradox with which the author of *The Haitian People* has dealt well. While the elite had been able to maintain their wealth and power in Haiti for nearly a century, the presidential succession before the United States occupation had largely been one of military chieftains, principally dark-skinned men from the north of the Republic. Michel Oreste, who had ruled for nine months in 1913–14, was the first civilian to be chosen president in Haiti's entire history up to that time; and Sudre Dartiguenave (1915–22), the North Americans' choice, was the first president since 1879 who was both a southerner and light-skinned. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century until the occupation, in other words, Haiti's presidents were almost entirely dark-skinned northern provincial leaders who literally seized power by invading Port-au-Prince and deposing their predecessors.

Hence, in describing the separation between elite and yeomanry, 701
it is essential to notice the traditional special role of the military, with 565
its particular overtones of color. Here was one institutional feature of Haitian society which was not directly dominated by the elite, and through which nonelite folk were able to attain special power. But in Haiti's case it is significant that the army itself was not firmly institutionalized; regional warlords, rather than a centralized officer corps,
made the decisions. Leyburn cites Auguste Magloire, who enumerat- 114
ed *sixty-nine* "important" revolutions between 1806 and 1879; had 175
this enumeration gone forward, it would have been much longer. Of 643
Haiti's twenty-four chief executives between 1807 and 1915, only 669
eight were in office for a period equal to their elected terms, and
seventeen were deposed by revolution. Before the United States oc- 565
cupation, then, the continuing power of the elite could be seen as 701
somewhat separate from the succession of nonelite generals who seized office over the years.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

648 The financing of these many revolutions was usually provided by
669 foreign merchants, bent upon installing a government that would
565 grant them special economic concessions (Munro, 1964:326–31). The
701 United States occupation ended this doleful succession of regimes
439 and, by throwing its weight to the elite, by suppressing military activity in the countryside, and by reforming the army, the United States gave a new meaning to the separation of the elite and the yeomanry. Leyburn's interpretation is consistent with these events; yet some Haitian scholars have differed with Leyburn's analysis.

114 In a lengthy review article, the dean of Haitian historians, Dr. Jean
564 Price-Mars (1942:1–50), questions the applicability of the term
563 "caste" to the social groupings of Haitian society. He notes that
Haitian law after the revolution never legitimized any distinction on
671 grounds of physical type, unlike a society such as the United States—
144 that in fact, the very basis of Haitian polity was the absence of such distinctions. Furthermore, Leyburn's interpretation is qualified by the fact that the elite and the rural masses are not entirely distinctive physically. In some parts of rural Haiti, particularly in the southern peninsula, there are many light-skinned people; and many individuals who qualify as members of the elite on all other counts are very dark in appearance. The fact that being "Negro" or "white" in Haiti is viewed as a matter of degree, rather than of kind, complicated by all the other criteria of social position employed in drawing distinctions, has important implications for the way social barriers have operated in that country.*

-114 Leyburn did not contend that all the effects of the United States
-565 occupation were in the direction of increasing the gap between the
ELITE AND THE YEOMANRY.

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563 * In this regard, Haiti is aligned with most of Latin America, in contradistinction to the
-564 United States, where many persons believe that "one drop of Negro blood" [sic] makes a
"Negro." The failure of North Americans to distinguish between sociological and genetic
171 categories of physical type has led to considerable confusion in their dealings with Latin Amer-
-144 ica and in their understanding of Latin American societies. North American race prejudice at its most extreme sees color as the primary basis for social ranking, and no individual accomplishment (for instance, in terms of economic or intellectual success) can overshadow the inferior status unalterably bestowed by certain physical traits. Haitian—and generally all Latin American—social distinctions do not rest solely on considerations of physical type; a black skin does not "doom" an individual if his attainments make him otherwise the equal of his lighter-skinned fellow citizens. Hence, it might be argued that the term "caste" would be more appropriate when applied to the Negro people of the United States (regardless of phenotype, and including those "Negroes" who are *sociologically* identified with the Negro people even if their physical appearance is dramatically Caucasian) than when applied to the peoples of Latin America.

elite and the yeomanry. For instance, he calls attention to one unanticipated 114
(but inevitable) result of the occupation in this connection: 563
the large number of children whose fathers were United States Marines, 144
and whose mothers were members of the Haitian rural masses. 565
In this way the occupation contributed to the growth of the physically 871
intermediate population of Haiti, especially among rural folk,
and thus perhaps to some bridging of the gap between yeomen and
elite. Much more important, by its contributions to a broadening of
the educational system, the occupation enabled talented black-skinned
youths to improve themselves and to acquire new aspirations.

Recent economic and political developments in Haiti, through the 114
period 1941–57, have contributed grounds for modification of the 175
Leyburn interpretation. Though Leyburn predicted that "for the 565
present and near future it is safe to say that there will be no more
black non-élite presidents" (p. 101), subsequent developments soon 643
proved him wrong. In January 1946, the government of elite member
Elie Lescot fell under military pressure. A junta consisting of
Franck Lavaud, Antoine Levelt, and Paul Magloire facilitated the installation
of Dumarsais Estimé as president. Estimé was a dark-skinned
man from the countryside (the village of Verettes, near St. Marc, in
west-central Haiti), who had received a good education, served as a
minister in the Vincent cabinet and, as a deputy, married a lighter-skinned
woman whose family's elite membership was secure. Estimé
might well be considered a self-made member of the elite, but he was
not born into it, and his accession to power was the political expression
of new possibilities in Haitian life.

The changes Estimé's regime symbolized were rooted in the intel- 175
lectual resistance to the United States occupation and in the search 186
for a Haitian identity in the face of that occupation. The strangely 645
easy domination that the United States wielded over Haitian society
for several decades, and the relatively unexploitative but patronizing
administration it provided, ended forever a fantasy that had gripped
Haitian intellectuals for more than a century. The world of 1804,
when a bloodied but defiant Haiti could bar by force of arms Napoleon's
dreams of a New World empire (and assist indirectly
thereby in the territorial expansion of a still weak United States) had
vanished. The time when a Pétion could aid, protect, and politically
influence a sick and tired Simón Bolívar was long gone. The world
had changed, while Haiti, the Haitians learned under their North

175 American masters, had nearly stood still. For almost a century,
648 Haiti's elite had taken justifiable pride in their ancestors' triumph
186 over Napoleonic France, even while they remained enthralled by
French culture. This strange ambivalence would no longer do. In ef-
[illegible] fect, the United States occupation compelled Haitian scholars to
rediscover what it meant to be Haitian.

114 As the writing of Jean Price-Mars (1928) expressed that identity
culturally, so the regime of Dumarsais Estimé began to express it
-829 politically. For the first time, Africa, and not simply France, became
-175 an important part of the nationalist dialogue. The Creole language
871 began to be studied in its own right, and a program to end illiteracy
212 through education in Creole was launched. Folkloristic studies, em-
191 phasizing the African component in Haitian rural life, especially as
814 expressed in religion, came into vogue. Haitians began to explore
their own society as a synthesis that was as much African as it was
555 French—and as a synthesis, rather than as a mechanical alignment of
643 two distinct traditions. The term *authentique* was employed to express what was "truly Haitian," and Haiti herself was viewed as a unique and original blending of two pasts. Under Estimé, rural folk of promise—and they were, in the nature of things, predominantly dark-skinned—were given greater opportunities, especially to be educated and to enter government service. Moreover, these developments took place at a time when Haiti's economic situation was relatively good, and Estimé enjoyed a measure of popular support rare in Haiti's entire history.

175 Furthermore, it was during the Estimé regime that Haitian cul-
-829 tural life reached some sort of climax. In the 1920s young Haitian in-
tellectuals had been deeply shaken by the United States occupation
186 and had begun to formulate their own answers to the questions it raised. Not only did Africa come into view as the wellspring of much that was Haitian but Haiti's status as an occupied though once-sovereign power dramatized the need for a social and political philosophy that fitted with hemispheric and international realities. French intellectual currents figured importantly in Haitian political thinking, both because the intellectuals of the French Antilles of the time were inspired by Haitian history and interested in Haiti, and because those islands and Haiti shared a curious affinity in their "Gallo-African" cultures. Anticolonial and Marxist points of view were espoused by a few Haitians, but these perspectives were complicated by changing

attitudes toward French culture in all of its expressions, and by a new 175 829
feeling of kinship for the peoples and cultures of Africa. 186

The variety of views expressed by Haitian intellectuals was colored by differences no more subtle than those characteristic of the intellectuals of any other country in the Caribbean region—even though North American observers unfortunately persist in treating such differences as politically irrelevant. There were those spokesmen who continued to embrace French culture and to reject "Africanism," only deploring the North American presence in Haiti. Others embodied their views in a staunchly Haitian nationalism and, as they began to view their country in a new light, invested the Haitian folk with an unrealistically romantic picturesqueness. Still others fastened upon the African theme with special intensity, and thereby gave a strong racist tinge to their nationalism.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, anthropology came to be seen as an im- 175
portant means for giving Haitians an accurate—that is, an "inside"— 829
picture of their own society; a number of young ethnologists, mainly 814
self-trained, began to publish works on Haitian culture. Soon anthropology was pressed into a political mold, anticipating similar developments in other "colonial" countries. The first novels purporting to deal with the common people, though sometimes tinged with idealized preconceptions of rural society, were published; and an impressive number of competent young poets devoted themselves to aesthetic explorations of the Haitian spirit. Haitian cultural and intellectual life, in short, was taken up with the rediscovery of Haiti and its people.

But the Estimé regime did not produce changes in the economic 175
structure of Haitian society of importance proportionate to the na- 433
tional cultural renascence. Even those modifications in the class 565
structure for which Estimé is sometimes given credit might not have 647
occurred, were it not for educational reforms that had begun in the 555
1920s and the beneficial effects of Haiti's prosperity of the mid-1940s. What Estimé could do was to open the ranks of an inefficiently large bureaucracy to able, if sometimes inadequately trained, newcomers of poor rural antecedents.

At the same time, as the Comhaire-Sylvains have suggested (1959: 114
179–89), a qualitatively different class group was beginning to emerge 175
in Port-au-Prince during Estimé's presidency, and the presence of 565
such a group suggests that new economic forces were feebly stirring.

175 These newcomers in the class structure enjoyed regular urban employment,
565 were mostly literate and legally married, and harbored
strong ambitions for the education of their children. Such persons
were certainly not elite members, and their behavior (as, for instance,
in their preference for speaking Creole rather than French) showed
it; yet they were not part of the rural masses, nor merely an example
of Marx's *Lumpenproletariat.* Yet significance of this new group for
the Leyburn "caste" theory of the elite is considerable. Even today,
if such persons lapse into poverty, their ideology will continue to
[467] matter politically. Estimé's regime also loosed new political trends,
since at first some encouragement was given to labor unions, and the
[362] construction of urban [illegible]-cost housing was undertaken. We are unable
to measure the long-term effects of these changes, but their
reality raises some questions about the rigidity that Leyburn's analysis
imputed to Haitian social structure.

175 In May 1950, after an unsuccessful bid to extend his term of office
669 illegally, Estimé's regime was toppled, again by a military junta. To
643 power came Paul Magloire, the first military figure to become chief
159 executive since the start of the United States occupation. Like Estimé
before him, Magloire symbolized certain effects of the occupation
upon Haiti's social and political structure and the way that structure
was continuing to change. Magloire's origins were not within the elite,
to judge by the traditional criteria. He was a black man, and from the
north; born in Quartier Morin, he associated himself with the elite of
the north coast port of Cap Haïtien, Haiti's second largest city. By
marriage to a "Capoise," whose family status was much higher than
his own, and by a successful career in the military during the occupation,
Magloire penetrated elite circles. As commander of the Palace
Guard, he had been a member of the junta that ousted Lescot in 1946,
replacing him with Estimé. In 1950, when Magloire became president,
after the army had forcibly discharged both houses of the legislature,
he apparently had the support of the elite and of the business
class, if not of the popular forces that had backed Estimé.

175 Magloire may be said to have moderated considerably the intensity
643 of Haitian politics, and his administration was not marked by so
sharp an ideological concern with the relative roles of elite and countryman.
[433] Times were good, and levels of life, both in the countryside
and in the capital, were probably as high as they had been at any time
in Haitian history. Certain economic gains were made in the tourist

industry, in the processing of essential oils, in extractive operations 175
(bauxite, copper), and in the manufacture of a few essential commod- 643
ities. The official attitude toward private investment, even by for- [433]
eigners, was unusually benign; and coffee, the big export crop, enjoyed a boom. Again, however, little effect could be seen in the basic economic structure. By 1956–57, when the Magloire regime was toppled, the era of apparent prosperity had come to an end.

Magloire's tenure ended as had his predecessor's; after a vain at- 175
tempt to prolong his regime by forcing through new laws, he was 643
brought down by the army and was succeeded by a series of juntas. 669
The politics of the brief interregnum preceding the accession of 665
François Duvalier was complicated by the rival claims of four presidential aspirants: Clément Jumelle, Daniel Fignolé, Louis Déjoie, and François Duvalier. These four men represented significantly different trends in Haitian thinking and were supported by different social groups. Jumelle, although regarded as the spiritual inheritor of the Magloire administration, won the support of many Haitian intellectuals; his appeal was partly grounded in his experience as finance minister in the Magloire cabinet, but the scandalous graft of the Magloire administration worked against him. Fignolé, too, had been a cabinet minister, but his antecedents and political philosophy differed sharply from Jumelle's. An eloquent, intense man of rural lower-class origins, Fignolé was regarded by many as a dangerous demagogue. His support came largely from the poorer urban classes, and his reputation as a union leader and as a "self-made" former minister of education gave him special strength among urban groups. Déjoie, considered to be the candidate of most of the business community and of the elite, was a highly successful agronomist and businessman who had done much to build rural industry; it is also generally believed that Déjoie was the "unofficial candidate" of the United States. Duvalier, trained as a doctor of medicine and for long an enthusiastic amateur ethnologist, had been a political enemy of the Magloire regime and, as a former minister in the Estimé cabinet, saw himself as the ideological descendant of Estimé. Duvalier appears eventually to have become the army's choice, ostensibly because he was considered "manageable"; at any rate, it was Duvalier who finally emerged as president, ending the uneasy interim which followed Magloire's ejection.*

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* Probably the most penetrating analysis of Haitian politics of the time is that provided by Manigat, 1964, to which this interpretation owes much.

175 The course of events leading up to Duvalier's election are difficult
643 to assess. Fignolé, whom the army had permitted to serve as president
66 for sixteen days during the interregnum, had been denied official recognition by the United States, suggesting that this country feared the implications of his political philosophy; his attempts at passing a whole new code of far-reaching social legislation apparently frightened the army, which removed him on grounds of "maintaining order." By the time an election decree was promulgated in August 1957, Fignolé was disqualified, and Jumelle had been forced to withdraw from candidacy. By election day, September 1957, only Déjoie and Duvalier were in contention, while Jumelle had gone into hiding. An attempted general strike, probably led by Déjoieiste elements, was stopped by the army, and Dr. François Duvalier was elected to power.

175 The Duvalier regime, beyond any doubt, has added something
642 new to the Haitian political scene. To begin with, it must be stressed
that Duvalier enjoys some popular support in the countryside as well
66 as in the urban centers. For many Haitians, Duvalier epitomizes the
701 return of the Estimé philosophy to Haiti, and it would be a serious
643 political error to suppose that the present regime is no more than an elite-hating dictatorship backed by machine guns. At the same time, the readiness of the Duvalieristes to use force probably exceeds that of any Haitian government in more than a century. Its excesses, moreover, appear to break certain traditions of political behavior—for instance, the unwillingness to take familial connections into account when political revenge is being carried out, the violence committed against women and adolescents regarded as political enemies, and so on. The most important break with tradition, however, has been the gradual undermining of the army as a political force—a force created in the first instance during the United States occupation.

175 In carrying out its plans, the Duvalier government has played more
642 creatively upon inconsistencies in United States policy than any pre-
648 ceding regime. It used United States military and economic power to
643 consolidate itself, while employing a posture of anti-North American hostility in its search for other internal sources of political support. Most strikingly, it has capitalized on the deterioration of the United States design in the Caribbean region, both to exact concessions and to enhance an international image of itself as a stalwart "democratic"

regime. That President Duvalier has been able to stay in power in 175
spite of internal dissaffection, sometime hostile United States propa- 642
ganda, a dire economic situation, personal ill health, and other woes, 648
is a tribute to his political acumen, if not to his principles. None of 643
this means, of course, that such consummate skill will continue to work; Haitian governments have a way of falling suddenly, and the Duvalier regime will probably not prove an exception.

Dr. Duvalier's success indicates that he has made certain correct 175
assessments, not only of Haiti's social and political structure but also 648
of United States policy with regard to Haiti. The occupation was [433]
notable for its failure to make any telling alterations in the economic [114]
structure or level of development of the country. Many beneficial [744]
changes were made, as Leyburn demonstrates, particularly in the [20]
areas of health and health services, communications, government ad- [871]
ministration, education, and transport (though the use of corvée labor on the roads led to serious abuses, and stimulated sanguinary [489]
guerilla warfare). But most significantly, the United States institu- 175
tionalized the army and police forces. The ragged bands of political 648
mercenaries of the past were dissolved; the officer-ridden army was 701
transformed into a small, well-trained, and well-organized force. 643
Eventual firm control by this force of weaponry, communications, 669
and transport ended the era of presidential succession by invasion, 625
turned the army into the major locus of nonelectoral, president-making power, and may have ended forever the possibility of an agrarian revolt against the central authority. Another political effect of the occupation was the importance it imparted to the United States ambassador, whose political opinions thereafter would matter significantly in the transmission of power at the top of the Haitian governmental system. The Duvalier regime has continuously taken full account of the consequences of United States interest; and its leaders have been able to watch the operation of that interest in the political events occurring between the fall of the Lescot government and the present.

In the view of one acute observer, President Duvalier, in order to 175
consolidate his power, had to cope with three other loci of political 643
strength in addition to the army and the United States ambassador. 66
The business community, located for the most part in Port-au-Prince, had strongly supported Déjoie's candidacy during the interregnum; its leaders were mainly members of the elite, and many had strong

175 business and personal ties with North Americans and other foreign
groups. Among the families of these leaders are Swiss, German, and
643 French nationals, and some Syrians and Lebanese who hold United
66 States citizenship. The business community had played a part in the
795 downfall of the Magloire regime, and business strikes were a typical
political instrument for putting pressure on presidential incumbents.
In addition, the clergy—particularly the Catholic clergy—exerted
political influence. Duvalier, while well aware of this, also attended
to the importance of vodoun* in Haiti, and to the influence wielded
by its cult leaders, particularly in the countryside and among the
urban poor. Finally, the President understood the strength of groups
such as the university students, the small but politically aware labor
unions, and certain professional associations, whose political strength
could be felt particularly in times of crisis. The Duvalier regime has
displayed intelligence as well as ruthlessness in dealing with these diverse
centers of political strength and potential opposition.

175 The official request for a United States Marine Corps mission to
648 "train" the Haitian Army was a brilliant political move by Duvalier,
apparently designed to serve several objectives simultaneously. It is
701 entirely correct that the renewed presence of the Marines in Haiti
702 created considerable rancor in some circles, but it also strengthened
66 Duvalier's hand in his dealings with all sources of internal opposition.
To some extent it apparently reassured the business community; and
it turned out to have reduced, rather than to have increased, the maneuverability
of the United States in developing a "corrective" or
"restraining" policy toward the Duvalier regime. Perhaps most important,
it helped Duvalier in his plan to build a praetorian guard to
counterbalance the power of the army itself.

625 The *tonton macoute*—a Creole epithet for the bogeyman—is an extremely
interesting variation on the security police theme. Its members
wear no official uniform (though blue denim pants and felt hats
[701] are affected). Members of the "TTM" carry out acts of terrorism
against groups and individuals and have seriously weakened the policing
[652] function and prestige of the regular army. Some calculations
put the operating costs of the TTM as high as one third of the governmental
budget. Though small groups of the TTM are distributed

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* Or, as it is more commonly called, "voodoo." Creole words employed in this introduction are transcribed in Laubach orthography (see Hall, 1953). It was not possible to extend this transcription to the original Leyburn text, where a "Gallic" orthography is followed.

throughout the country, the central administration remains in the 625
capital; urban units are dispatched to the countryside at times, if any show of internal political resistance is sensed. TTM members also sometimes engage in struggles with each other over political spoils; but too little is known to analyze internal strains within this paramilitary, secret-police organization. The TTM has proved particularly useful for carrying out the murders of outspoken individual political opponents and for crushing draconically any threat of strikes in the Port-au-Prince business community.

Little is known of the antecedents of TTM members. While it is 178
customary among the elite to describe these myrmidons as "trash," 625
some of them are literate, have some education, vaunt a political ideology—a kind of nationalist-*négritude* mystique, with strong Fascist elements—and differ dramatically from the ragged, illiterate followers of the warlords of pre-1915 Haiti. In fact, the TTM lieutenants are a direct, if somewhat deformed, product of the Estimé regime, a decade of structurally unsound prosperity, a culturally nationalistic ideology, and, more remotely, of the United States occupation itself.

With regard to the army, Duvalier has followed a policy of careful 643
attrition. While the United States Marine Corps "mission" was 701
(probably unknowingly) serving to immobilize opposition, Duvalier began to change the character of the army general staff. In the course of less than seven years he completely revamped the leadership of the army five times; this process not only kept the colonels off balance but allowed the President to reward loyal younger followers—principally those with dark skins, it is said—with rapid promotions.

The relationship between the Duvalier regime and the Catholic 642
clergy has been one of increasing alienation. At times members of the 795
clergy stood high in the regime, two having even served as members
of the cabinet; but not the slightest Church resistance has been toler- 661
ated. The low point in Duvalier–Church relations was the interruption of a mass by an armed TTM unit in downtown Port-au-Prince; leading members of the hierarchy later were summarily ejected from the country, and the Jesuit order was banned. Church power has waned significantly, both in the capital and in the countryside, as the regime has consolidated itself. Some observers believe that Duvalier is not so unwise as to aim at the complete elimination of the Church, but that he hopes instead to "nationalize" the clergy on some mutually agreeable basis.

643 At the same time, the President has expressed his favorable interest
771 in vodoun and is said to practice it; this statement, however, has
overtones of malevolence that are not appropriate. Vodoun is a religion,
795 though it lacks a centralized priestly hierarchy or administrative organization. Outside the elite, Catholicism in Haiti has always been colored by vodoun elements. The Haitian people as a whole invest no effort in distinguishing what is "really Catholic" from what is not, in their religious practices; in this regard Haitian countrymen do not really differ from folk practitioners of Catholicism anywhere. By its misreading of the piety of the Haitian masses, and its unceasing hostility to vodoun—quite different from the church policy in the so-called "Indian countries" of Latin America—the Church had failed to secure its influence over the Haitian people. In contrast, Duvalier's understanding of Haitian religious sociology has proved superior, and is consistent with the *authentique* ideology of the 1940s, though doubtless much more extreme in its implications.

642 Finally, the Duvalier regime has invaded such institutions as the
871 National University and the trade unions, and maintains close surveillance
over any individuals it regards as politically suspicious. Loyalty
467 oaths are required at the university; a public press no longer exists;
204 the unions, never strong, are now entirely powerless. But it
661 should be clear from this description of the Duvalier regime that repression
is not the key to Duvalier power so much as the means for
perpetuating that power under Haitian conditions. The key to Duvalier
642 power is to be found instead in the structure of Haitian society,
648 in the social history of the past two decades, and in the policy of the United States, weakened by its inescapable preference for "stability" over "radicalism." In his own way, President Duvalier is as radical as he can be; but he is no Castro. It is now an open secret that Haiti's support for sanctions against Cuba approved at Punta del Este was matched by economic concessions from the United States; that the Marines, knowingly or not, immobilized anti-Duvalier opposition in a period when its supporters could be picked off, driven into exile, or jailed; that the official Duvalier offer of Môle St. Nicholas to the United States as a substitute for Guantánamo, though irrelevant, was warmly reassuring to some North American political thinkers; and that Duvalier, while he employs considerable "blackmail diplomacy" in his dealings with the United States and is now out of favor, is still considered "reliable" in that most important respect.

Nor is it sufficient to label *Duvalierisme* "pathological" or "paranoid." 642
The roots of this ideology are to be found in Haiti, not elsewhere;
its supporters are the product of Haitian times and ideas; and
their social identity, while not entirely clear, would probably pose
few enigmas if enough data were available.* In order to make clear [114]
these assertions, however, it is necessary to look again at Haitian society,
the Haitian society Leyburn has described so well, and to reexamine
the terms that have been used by him and by others to describe it.
174

Though the societies of the Caribbean Sea differ significantly from 175
each other, many of them share certain general historical experiences. 171
Unlike the colonial areas of the Old World, these islands were largely 648
populated from abroad, and in this regard they resemble the Atlantic lowland areas of mainland America. However, the colonial history of the islands meant that they would long remain the instruments of policy formulated in foreign capitals. Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and other islands were, during most of their postconquest history, the outposts of far-flung colonial empires, and the design of their societies was conditioned by this dependence and subjugation. As "plantation islands," their agriculture, demography, mode of settlement, and social
structure were attuned to metropolitan needs and objectives. Unlike [161]
most of Africa and Asia, the Antilles lost their native populations almost entirely, owing to enslavement, overwork, disease, and war,
early in the era of conquest and settlement. There remained the vestiges [177]
of native traditions, assimilated into the new, growing cultures
of the postconquest period. The Indians themselves, wherever they [563]
were able to survive, were also assimilated through interbreeding with Old World migrants.
174

The newcomers came from Europe, Africa, and Asia, bringing 175
with them what they could of their ancestral traditions, but never 171
able to transfer their social heritages as intact bodies of belief and behavior. 167
Hence the cultures of the new Caribbean societies were built up out of elements originating in many different places, while their social forms took shape under conditions of colonial control. The peoples of the islands were able to maintain some continuities with

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* One interpreter of the Haitian political scene (Bastien, 1960:845–48) has suggested that Leyburn's analysis of Haitian society as a "two-caste" system greatly influenced local political thinking by strengthening one idea: "the black intellectual must regain political power for the benefit of the country's majority."

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

The peoples of the islands were able to maintain some continuities with
17 the past, even while the new setting and changing conditions led to the development of certain innovations in society and culture. In a few Caribbean societies, Haiti included, freedom brought with it the opportunity to create a yeomanry—an independent, landholding class of agriculturists who produced most of their own consumption needs and also produced commodities for sale. These were "reconstituted yeomen," whose ways of life combined elements from the African and American Indian past, as well as considerable European and Asian influences, in new cultural constellations.

177 Haitian country folk are a particularly good example of such a
231 historical process. The crops Haitian yeomen cultivate include the
241 maize, sweet potatoes, and manioc of the indigenous American Indian
412 (Taino) people, and other cultigens such as papaya and avocado which had been domesticated in mainland aboriginal America; and items like taro and mangoes from Oceania, sesame and sugarcane which originated in the Middle East and India, and vegetables from Europe. Their domestic animals, including cattle, swine, and fowls, are nearly all from the Old World. The chief agricultural tools—hoe, billhook, and dibble, which are well adapted to Haiti's shallow topsoil and hilly terrain—may be European or African in origin; the practice of burning off weeds before planting may be African or American Indian. In the case of each trait—crop, tool, practice—one is confronted by the diverse and entangled culture history of the
177 Haitian people. What is true of agriculture is true of all else. The re-
771 ligion of Haiti is at once two religions rather than one: Catholicism
19 *and* vodoun. Yet these two belief systems form a single ideology for most Haitians, particularly in the rural areas and among those of the urban lower classes. The Creole language is similarly complex in origin. While its lexicon is predominantly derived from French, parts of its syntax are not of Romance origin. For instance, the use of postpositive nominalizing particles and the absence of gender typify Haitian Creole, and are decidedly not Romance in character. Terminology shows much the same; for example, animal names and anatomical terms are mainly French in origin, but some cooked foods carry names of African provenience.

177 The "mixing" of various elements of culture from different tradi-
174 tions is, of course, neither uniquely Caribbean nor uniquely Haitian. All cultures are growths out of the past, and change by losing and gaining traits and by combining and recombining their substance in

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

new ways. The virtual extirpation of indigenous culture, however, 177
occurred in few areas outside the New World; it was particularly 174
characteristic of the coastal and lowland areas of this hemisphere.
Hence, Caribbean culture is almost entirely transplanted and recently 177
synthesized. In the Caribbean area, an additional distinction lay in the 174
persistently colonial character of the islands and in the effects of this
colonialism on local life. Wherever the plantation flourished, large 563
populations of African origin grew out of the original importations of
slaves. This was true from the southern United States to Brazil, but
was especially marked in the islands, where local populations of European
extraction were either absent or reduced by the spread of the
plantation. Only in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Santo Domingo, and in 171
some of the smaller islands that developed no plantation system, were 563
substantial proportions of Europeans to be found. In Haiti, the early 174
cultural admixture of Colonial Spanish and Indian was soon swamped
by the cultures of Africa, and the European cultural component became
predominantly French after 1697, when the western third of
Hispaniola—today's Haiti—was ceded to France.

But Haitian society did not come to be purely African, in any 174
sense, nor is that society more than broadly similar to the other societies
of the Caribbean. The kind of society in which the French 177
masters and their African slaves met and mixed, and the subtropical, 178
colonial environment in which they lived, imposed their own conditions
for culture growth. What the Haitian people could keep as a
living part out of the African past was limited by the regimen of
slave plantation life; what they could borrow or copy from their
masters was affected by the nature of the social relationships between
those who held power and those who had to bend to it. Ultimately,
independence meant that the Haitian people could employ what they
already knew and practiced under slavery, but in a wholly new
social setting.

The substantial isolation that followed independence led to slowed 175
change, both social and cultural, and to the gradual spread of the yeoman 177
way of life throughout rural Haiti. From 1804 until the United
States occupation, Haiti was probably less affected by external developments 178
than any other country in the hemisphere. In this regard, 171
its social history is noticeably different from that of the other Caribbean
islands, some of which, like Puerto Rico and Cuba, were forcibly
brought back into the mainstream of world developments in the

175 same century in which Haiti withdrew. The yeomanry of Haiti in
177 the nineteenth century was hence able to develop a traditionalism of
178 unusual firmness and persistence.

171 This traditionalism, however, has had a high price. The economic
productivity of the rural cultivator has not risen; it can be argued
433 convincingly that poor land use, erosion, and population growth
311 have meant lower levels of consumption for the common people in
161 1966 than obtained a hundred years or more ago. The rural masses,
565 though overwhelmingly consisting of landholders, have been unable
-178 to break out of a stagnation that is economic as well as cultural. Such
stasis has been based to some extent on the limited responsiveness of
-175 the rural folk to outside stimulus. But also important in maintaining
114 the past is the national institutional system that took on its characteristic
511 shape after 1804, and under which the rural masses still live. That
system, the origins of which Leyburn has examined and assessed with
such care, is controlled, as we have seen, by a numerically small segment of the national population that is markedly distinct from the
yeomanry itself.

565 The nature and internal differentiation of the elite needs much more study, though it seems clear already that it is by no means a single solidary class embracing all but the yeomen. Whatever the structure of the elite, the relationship between the yeomen on the one hand and the real holders of power on the other must be understood if one is to understand Haiti. The yeoman is defined in terms of the elite; he is dependent upon it and subject to it. This is what is meant when it is said that the yeomanry, like the elite, forms only a part-society. Yet without the yeomen, there would be no elite. The elite live by controlling and taxing the rural masses, and find their sustenance and their power in rural productivity. Elite and yeomen, then, are bound together in unequal but interdependent relationships in Haiti as they are in other less developed societies of a similar kind. In such cases, the political role of the yeomanry is usually minor, and few opportunities may arise for the expansion of its political strength.
565 If the yeomanry fails to increase its productivity in ways that enable it
-433 to control more of its own surpluses, its role in affecting national political
664 decisions may grow narrower rather than wider, and this ominous
642 possibility has become a worldwide phenomenon. It becomes
more intensified wherever industry and trade grow, unaccompanied by parallel growth in yeoman productivity or in new and more widely representative national institutions.

That the separateness of yeomanry and elite had visible and sociologically 565
important expression in physical type in Haiti was a clear 563
consequence of the history of that country. But the traditional preponderant 664
light skins at the top of the structure and the preponderant 642
darkness at its base are less important than the domination of the total structure, and of the institutional means for changing it, by a mere fraction of the national population. It is the *power* of the elite which has mattered through time; its physical appearance has been only a historically derived expression of that power. Such a balance of politically weak masses against numerically sparse power holders is common, perhaps particularly in the "less developed world"; but each such case has certain special characteristics. Haiti's special nature is not simply in its being a yeoman country, and one in which a small
group dominates the mass. As a rural, agrarian, unindustrialized, politically [181]
sovereign, and quasi-capitalistic country, Haiti shares much [171]
with other lands; but in each regard its own particularity needs to be assessed.

The rurality of Haiti is extreme, not simply because there are no 361
concentrations of population in excess of 25,000 except for Port-au-Prince
and Cap Haïtien but also because towns of intermediate size 369
are few in number, and the urban concentrations in the country's two 489
cities are substantially of relatively recent rural origin. Port-au-Prince dominates the Republic in all of its economic, political, and social activities. Furthermore, the rural towns have been losing to the capital, not gaining from it. Until the United States occupation, the larger towns of the coast, such as Jérémie, Jacmel, and St. Marc, were united economically with each other, and to some extent with the capital, by a lively coastwise shipping system, and the inland towns were tributary to those of the coast. The growth of inland transport during the occupation strengthened the interior towns while coastwise shipping declined, but the capital grew even more important as the sole economic center of the Republic. Since the 1940s, the rapid deterioration of the road system has left both inland and coastal towns enfeebled; only Port-au-Prince has remained strong.

The dominion of Port-au-Prince is firm, and there is no focus of -369.
power in the countryside that can counteract it. Those few foreign 473
enterprises in Haiti that base themselves outside the capital city use
local port facilities (e.g. Miragoâne for Reynolds Aluminum, Cap 504
Haïtien for the sisal plantations of the north) and do not affect the -489
development of the interior transport.

369 development of interior transport. The only passable roads in the
494 Republic run from Aux Cayes in the south to the capital, and from
Cap Haïtien in the north to the capital. Transport and communica-
646 tions simply symbolize the power that Port-au-Prince wields, since the same circumstances characterize all national institutional arrangements. Thus Haiti is an extreme example of urban domination, even though its urban population is a fraction of the national total. The consequence has been to keep most of the rural folk cut off from the apparatus that effects national decisions and shapes national policy. Haiti's national legislature, never important in limiting presidential power, is less so today than ever; at best, it had only represented the interests of provincial towns as opposed to the capital, and never the interests of the mass of country people.

701 The local military and judiciary officials possess the formal author-
ity vested in them by the state, and their power is very considerable.
692 Few local people would dare challenge their decisions, and the de-
642 vices for appeal against arbitrary exercise of authority are few. Admit-
369 tedly, at the lowest local level the *chef de section*—who is traditionally appointed by the captain of the military in the *commune* center and is himself a yeoman—is subject to some genuine restraint by local inhabitants. Jean Comhaire-Sylvain (1955:620–24) has argued convincingly that the people of a community are capable of insisting on democratic procedure in those matters requiring decision that come to the attention of local authority. But such decisions have little or nothing to do with larger issues. The yeomanry cannot directly make its wishes felt in national politics; and national politics are conducted almost without reference to the aspirations of the rural masses. It is precisely in the separateness of local life from the mainstream of national decision-making that the political impotence of the yeomanry is demonstrated.

311 Haiti's agrarian nature cannot be expressed simply by saying it is a
423 rural and yeoman country. Haiti does not have a "land problem," as
that phrase is conventionally applied to Latin America. It does, it is
171 true, suffer from land shortage, inasmuch as too little land is worked at too low a level of productivity and must feed too many mouths. But a very substantial proportion of the rural masses owns land, or has regular access to it. It is true that most land is held in small plots and without clear title. But those persons who own no land or who lack land to work are proportionally fewer than in any other Carib-

311 bean country, and perhaps fewer than in any country in Latin Amer-
423 ica. The agriculture itself, with the exceptions now of those very few
171 large-scale plantations in sisal and sugarcane, is adapted to small plots
and is worked with intensive labor and few tools on hilly land. Com-
433 pared with agricultural production, especially of cash crops, in most
178 mainland Latin American countries, productivity is low. The yeo-
manry is conservative in its agricultural practices, and not ready to
change unless the changes entail minimal risk and the gains to be real-
241 ized are clearly demonstrable (Erasmus, 1952:20–26). Yeomen culti-
177 vate with three goals in mind: cash income from world-market
185 commodities (for instance, coffee, sisal, vetiver); cash income from
434 items produced for local sale and consumption; and subsistence.
While they are heavily involved in production for sale, their crop
choices and land-use patterns rest fundamentally on a subsistence
orientation. All grow a substantial part of their own food, especially
sorghum, maize, sweet potatoes, taro, manioc, malanga (*Xanthosoma
sagittifolium* Schott), plantains and bananas, fruits and vegetables, and
423 rice where possible. The land is invested with considerable affect:
823 gods live in it; it is the ultimate security against privation; family
471 members are buried in it; food and wealth come from it; and it is
good in itself, even if not cultivated. While such attitudes are com-
mon in yeoman societies, Haiti's history of slavery, and of access to
land through revolution, has given a special symbolic significance to
landowning. Land is valued above all else and is sometimes held "un-
economically"—that is, even when the capital and labor power to
work it are lacking.

114 Leyburn describes better than any other writer the history of land
175 acquisition by the yeoman after 1804. The French plantations lay in
423 ruins, never to recover, while early authoritarian attempts to restore
the prerevolutionary economy under native Haitian leadership soon
failed. In the course of a century, the Haitian people laid claim to their
own soil, while population growth and the adoption of the French
tradition of equal inheritance progressively reduced the average size
of holdings. In spite of some plantation development after the United
States occupation, most agricultural land in Haiti is still employed in
small holdings, and "land reform" in the conventional sense—the
breaking-up of large estates and the creation of a class of small land-
462 holders—is nearly irrelevant to Haiti's needs.

443 As today's yeomanry cultivates, so its womenfolk market. Nearly

462 three hundred marketplaces serve the towns and countryside, some
443 of them patronized by thousands of buyers and sellers on market
days. By participating in active small-scale trade, the wives of the
yeomen contribute in a limited way to national economic efficiency
and growth. As in all heavily agrarian economies marked by poor
storage facilities, inferior transportation, and low consumer incomes
there is considerable substitution of labor for capital, and there are
high losses through spoilage. Except for the marketing of export
commodities, much time is consumed in bargaining, in carrying, and
in hand-processing of various sorts. But these activities are the accompaniments
of the general low level of development of the Haitian
economy, not one of its causes.

443 The economic challenges posed by agriculture on the one hand,
241 and by marketing on the other, differ significantly. Since these activities
462 are carried out predominantly along the lines of a sexual division
of labor, the Haitian countrymen and their marketing wives
114 differ in some regards in their attitudes. Foreign observers of the
462 nineteenth century commented regularly on the industry and energy
of Haitian rural women, stressing their predominance in trade. Some
174 writers have attributed this convention to the West African tradition,
175 since women are the marketers, men the farmers, in many African
443 societies. Leyburn, however, notes that the militarism and political
241 unrest that have marked Haiti during so much of its history were
433 serious impediments to peaceful trade. Women came to predominate
in marketing, he theorizes, because men did what they could to
avoid the towns, since they were often impressed into roving army
bands if they traveled far from home. Whatever the historical causes
may be, it has been established that the women of Haiti's countryside
carry on most of the internal trade, while their husbands do most of
the farming. These women, on the whole, know more about the
towns, mix more easily with outsiders, and show more intrepidity in
trade than the men show in agriculture. Yet it has been demonstrated
that, for most of them, the scale of their enterprise is so modest and
the economic opportunities open to them so restricted that their energy
and daring can do little to increase the level of productive
activity (Mintz, 1964:256-86).

47 Haiti's lack of large factories, mechanized production, and a skilled
industrial labor force means that the country is unindustrialized by
any usual measure.

any usual measure. But Haitians do produce by traditional craft meth- 463
ods a surprisingly large number of the articles they need for daily life.
In the countryside it is possible to see many persons engaged, mostly
on a part-time basis, in craft activities and home industry that have [282]
their roots in the prerevolutionary era. Leatherworkers operating
small, crude tanneries still flourish. Charcoal-burners, and operators [339]
of small lime kilns that produce building material, are found in every [325]
village. Smiths make and repair simple tools, working with forges of [322]
archaic design. Combs are made from cows' horns and tortoiseshell,
buttons from bone; carrying-bags, fish traps, and a wide variety of [326]
baskets from withes, bamboo strips, and grasses; wooden bowls, [313]
mortars and pestles, tool handles and spoons from local woods; dip- [322]-
pers, pots, and candelabra from tin cans; and sandals from tires and
inner tubes. Sawyers cut and dress timber; cabinetmakers still manu-
facture simple furniture of traditional design from the fast-disappear-
ing tropical woods; many women, working either with the simplest [294]
sorts of sewing machines or by hand, make clothing for use and for [396]
sale. Along the coasts there are dugout-makers, shipbuilders, and sail-
and seine-makers. Simple mattresses, fabricated from local grasses, 435
are sold in every large marketplace, as are crude ceramic wares made [352]
by local potters. At the start of the twentieth century, Italian immi- [415]
grants brought a sturdy tradition of cobbling to Haiti, which has
been destroyed only recently by the flood of American imported 463-
shoes with their attached prestige, until recently, *vitièlo* was a collo- [294]-
quial term for shoe, coming from the name of the most famous of [177]
those Italian cobblers. [291]

One of the striking features of Haiti's craft traditions is its relative
stability since the revolution. It was under slavery that Haitians first 463-
became "westernized," learning what were then standard French 177
craft practices, adjusted to local colonial conditions, probably with 178
some modifying features coming from the African past. It was before 257
the revolution that the Haitian people learned and stabilized their 274
consumer tastes, agricultural and craft standards, and work proce-
dures. Such preferences and standards were worked out primarily in
terms of the demands of the plantation regime itself; but even the
most repressive social system leaves some opportunity for accultura-
tion. Today's sugar-making shops and rural rum distilleries employ
techniques centuries old and little modified over time. Housebuilding 342
and woodworking techniques in the countryside are substantially 322-
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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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322 unchanged from an earlier era. The prevailing quality of Haitian
178 rural and craft industry, then, is one of great stability and conservatism.

493 At the same time, of course, major events since the revolution have
463 left their imprint on this part of life. Hardly a roadside village in Haiti today, for instance, lacks an automobile mechanic, even though these men are mostly self-educated and work with hardly any tools. Their skills became part of Haitian culture in this century and are of-
383 ten of a simple order no longer typical of more developed areas. Tire tubes, for instance, are "vulcanized" by the use of an ingenious de-
177 vice made from a board and an old piston, kerosene providing the heat to make the seal; this technique, along with the sewing of damaged truck tires, was almost certainly introduced and diffused by the United States Marines.

47 But these quaint additions do not alter the fact that shop and fac-
31 tory industry are nearly absent, and extractive industry virtually non-
178 existent. Haiti's one alumina extraction enterprise, foreign-owned, is now shut down. There is but one flour mill, and that is foreign-
[258] owned as well. One or two textile mills and sugar factories, estab-
[339] lished with foreign capital, still function, as do a modern cement
[464] factory and a few other small plants established in the 1950s. These industries, scanty as they are, were of great importance to Haiti, since they represented substantial investments, held out the promise of reduced dependence on imports in significant categories, and contributed to the beginnings of an industrial proletariat. However, they involved only a tiny fraction of the national labor force, and they have not proved entirely successful. As a result, Haiti lacks any reserve of labor acquainted with modern industry, even though many people, both urban and rural, work at tasks that might be considered more industrial than agricultural.

-47 Most important for the present discussion, the minor developments
433 in Haitian industry have not led to an expanded market and have not
-178 resulted in any firm increase in productivity. Industrial growth, in the sense in which it has occurred in countries such as those of West-
171 ern Europe—or for that matter in Mexico or Argentina—is entirely lacking. The absence of such growth is perhaps especially significant if Haiti be compared with a neighbor such as Jamaica or Puerto Rico.
[648] These countries, one now independent, the other a North American dependency—have both gained real increments from the investment activities of outsiders;

433 activities of outsiders; Haiti has experienced few such increments, even as a result of the United States occupation. Its citizens cannot readily
47 migrate anywhere; its educational system cannot prepare its people
171 adequately for the modern world; its civil service has proved neither
178 stable nor reliable; its labor force has limited experience with the fac-
648 tory system; and even two decades of active North American intervention did nothing to remake the economic and political structure of the nation. In more recent years, some of the "development projects" foisted on the people of a sovereign Haiti by foreigners working with Haitian officials would not have been tolerated by the colonial representatives of any foreign power obligated to report its activities before the United Nations Trusteeship Council. In view of these things, one is tempted to claim that Haiti has suffered from all the disadvantages of political sovereignty while enjoying none of its advantages.

Unlike those colonial dependencies that were able, over time, to develop internal political ideologies through which to face the pressures imposed by the colonial powers, Haiti was tested by hardly any challenge but its own lack of development. In this sense only can it be said that the freedom Haiti had won in an incredible revolution against powerful enemies came to be a punishment. The struggle brought the Haitian people justified admiration in many quarters, but its price has been isolation and virtual abandonment.

648 It was the United States occupation that made a lie of Haitian sov-
72 ereignty, and even of the invincibility of its people. The Haitian "bandits," variously estimated to have numbered from 2,000 to 6,000, who died in what is probably best described as a war of resistance against the North Americans, were barely able to maintain even a brief local conflict against several well-armed companies of United States Marines. Yet that occupation gave Haiti little in return for its denial of the claim of national sovereignty. The public works and reform programs instituted by the United States, designed to give the country roads, schools, hospitals, a disciplined army, a "legitimate" government, and a schooled civil service, hardly endured longer than the occupation itself, since nothing had been done to transform the social and economic base of the society. Within a decade of the North American withdrawal, the gleaming superstructure the occu-
000 pation created had begun to decay. The major effect of North Amer-

The major effect of the North Amer-
648 ican tenure seems to have been to make possible a much more telling
642 centralism in political control than had been operative in Haiti at any
time since the fall of the Christophe regime; and the consequences of
this change are still being felt.

241 Small-scale rural cultivators are famous for their tendency to con-
565 fine their consumption to culturally conventionalized levels—that is,
433 to live as their predecessors lived before them. Though they are in-
178 volved in commercial spheres larger than the communities in which
185 they live, they seek to limit that involvement and to maintain their
511 cash expenditures at a low level. It is in this sense that Haiti might be
472 called a "quasi-capitalistic" society. To put it another way, yeomen
of this sort do not seek to change or to expand their production—rather, they aim to conserve a way of life set by tradition. The ideology of resistance to social and cultural change is one of the major obstacles to development; but it would be rash to damn such an ideology without reflection. In Haiti, for instance, there has long been pressure upon the rural masses to expand their production of coffee, the major export crop. However, this pressure has not been accompanied by any serious grass-roots attempt to improve coffee production or to offer genuine incentives to the cultivators. The yeomanry has no assurance at all that any expansion of effort will lead to gains *for them*; and they are little prepared to invest such effort merely because they are told that it will be good for Haiti. In fact, it is likely
[439] that the production of subsistence crops has expanded in recent years
at the cost of coffee production, for the yeoman knows that he can at least be sure of eating and of selling locally such crops as maize, sorghum, and yams, regardless of what may happen in Port-au-Prince or to the world coffee market. This view, combined with the yeoman's painfully acquired distrust of those who prate at length concerning his welfare, has meant a virtual stagnation of agricultural export production, even though the whole land quite literally depends on this production in order to progress.

241 The effect of this rural resistance is to create an apparent very sharp
565 difference in goals between countryman and bureaucrat. It is per-
433 fectly understandable that the countryman should fail to see the con-
185 nection between heightened coffee production and a higher level of
public welfare and social services. His experiences hardly persuade him that it is his surplus-producing capacity that underlies the kind and quality of public institutions with which the state provides him.

241 Nor does his effort in producing more and better cash crops translate
565 itself directly into higher consumption, since he has no say in setting
185 the price for his coffee. Under the circumstances, it is naïve to sup-
433 pose that "education" alone can make the yeoman's role in economic
or political development a more active one. The disposition to maintain a habitual level of consumption, rather than to believe that an increase in productivity will result in expanding services or improved consumption, is difficult to change; and the quasi-capitalistic quality of Haitian agricultural production is merely one way of saying as much. Economic change, in this sense, has to depend partly on changes in attitudes toward production. Until an agricultural extension service worthy of the name is able to make a massive attack on the shortcomings of yeoman cultivation in Haiti, this conservatism will perpetuate itself. And agricultural extension will not be able to wage this battle for change—even when its services become adequate in quality and quantity—unless the promises of greater economic rewards or of improved social services for the rural masses are occasionally honored.

47 The term "quasi-capitalistic" has much less force, of course, when
433 applied to urban enterprise. But there, too, economic activity has a
565 curiously static quality when compared to enterprise in more devel-
oped countries. The Port-au-Prince capitalist is famous for "playing
178 it safe." Import-export trade, tourist hotels, guided tours, gas stations, and urban slum real estate are more rewarding spheres of investment than shops or commercial farms. A small but economically important Syrian-Lebanese-Italian group limits its local investment accordingly, as do most of those "native" Haitians who carry on their businesses in the towns and cities. Elite families consist largely of siblings who interlock their economic activities with government, the military, agricultural processing and exporting, consumer-goods importing, tourist-connected services, and the professions. A slum block, a post in the ministry of tourism, a colonelcy, or a tour agency, can be a lucrative investment; few indeed are the Haitians prepared to take the risks needed to develop highly productive farms, to produce improved strains of poultry, or to introduce industrial skills through a modern machine shop. And the reasons for this lack of verve and daring are easy to find. Governmental instability, excessive
[648] taxation, lack of access to markets, and the absence of roads, communication, small-scale credit facilities, and the like mean that special

intrepidity in enterprise is required. It is striking that those foreign
648 captains of industry—mainly from the United States—who invest in
Haiti, expect (and often get) governmental guarantees of a sort they
could not dream of in their own countries; in this regard, they merely
conform to Haitian expectations.

433 Haiti's problems, then, are not simply those that face any less
developed country, vast though such problems may be. Nor is it intelligent
47 to lay Haiti's problems at the feet of the nation's present rulers.
178 The structure of the national economy has not changed significantly
during the past twenty-five years—except that boom years could
provide a temporary aura of prosperity—regardless of the philosophy
648 or popularity of the regime in power. If nothing else, the present
nadir of Haiti's fortunes demonstrates that United States aid averaging
652 twelve and a half million dollars yearly over more than a decade
433 has produced no enduring improvements of any kind. It may further
demonstrate that, shockingly poor as the country is, it emphatically
does not depend on such aid. As of 1964, the regime in power was
operating on a monthly budget of $1,800,000, only $400,000 of which
went for purposes other than salaries. In other words, the ministries
[511] do little more than perpetuate themselves unchanged. The yeomanry,
living near subsistence level, continues to produce most of what it
needs, while restricting its cash expenditures even more severely than
in the past. The risks—in terms, say, of public health—of running a
society under these circumstances are great; but there is no reason to
suppose that regimes of the Haitian sort will be destroyed or improved
by a show of popular unrest originating in the countryside.
[369] Difficult as life is for the Haitian countryman, and no people in Latin
America lives more poorly, the real pinch is probably being experienced
more acutely among the city folk than among their rural fellow
citizens. It matters politically, therefore, who these city folk are
and what they do.

463 To begin with, there has been a significant loss of professional
167 people, almost all of whom were urban, through migration and exile,
especially since 1958. Haitian doctors, dentists, and other professionals
are widely scattered today, both in the developed and the less
developed countries of the world. Former army officers, journalists,
diplomats, businessmen, and academicians have fled political repression,
perhaps with the hope of eventually returning to their own
country.

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457 country. The complete enfeeblement of tourism has also led to some
445 migration and to an accompanying decline of services and service
668 "industries" in the capital. These losses have surely hurt Haiti and
642 have damaged its chances for growth as well as its capacity to main-
66 tain the health, education, and morale of its people. It is not clear,
167 however, to what extent such changes may have produced a negative
political reaction to the Duvalier regime. Urban support for Dr. Duvalier appears to have come from some intellectuals, from some army officers, and from portions of the urban lower classes; but numerically most important were those low-paid but literate and aspiring wage-earners whom the Comhaire-Sylvains (1959) refer to as "Class III" members. These observers have stressed that the Class III group consisted mainly of industrial employees, those engaged in food-processing, hotel services, workshops, and the like. It was this group that the Comhaire-Sylvains credited with the Duvalier victory in 1957, pointing out in addition that "in the small country towns almost all officials, both civil and military, and traders, seemed to belong to this class" (p. 185). If the economic crisis that has gripped Haiti in recent years severely affects the position of this class, the political situation will reflect as much. But the ideology of Class III members—so far as it can be inferred at all—would suggest that one Duvalier may merely be replaced by another. At the same time, the depopulation of those groupings whose members might have led a qualitatively different kind of opposition, during the period of tenure of the United States Marine Corps Mission to Duvalier, may have indefinitely postponed the opportunity for creating a genuinely new political direction.

66 To state it another way, there are no signs at this time that the re-
178 gime in power will be pulled down by any organized Haitian opposition. More important, since regimes resting on a narrow popular base have a way of falling without change, there is no indication that within Haiti's present national institutional structure, a genuine opposition to Duvalier-type governments can take shape. This means that even if regime should follow regime in rapid succession, there is little reason to expect that any of them could effect fundamental changes in Haitian society. If such an interpretation is correct, it presupposes an internal equilibrium or stasis so strong that no force for change in half a century has been able to make a politically significant difference.

114 This pessimistic view is supported by what is known at this time

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SV3 Haiti SV3

about Haitian society.* It does not, however, take note of the remarkable failure of foreign experts to make any adequate assessment 114 of the potentialities of that society, or of its most-needed changes. Some of the problems of development, remarked on by Leyburn in 1941, have never even been explored adequately: the advisability of primary education in Creole; the need for an effective agricultural extension; the relationship of nutrition to work habits; and the like. Even basic sociological studies of a sort that could provide data for planned change are lacking—"of the process of socialization . . . of the motivating forces, the dominant wishes, the attitudes and social values of the masses . . . of social mobility" (pp. 308–09). 648 Foreign-inspired development projects have been, for the most part, crash projects, designed to satisfy Haitian political goals, rather than economic or social goals. A productive relationship between foreign development agency representatives and government officials has never been achieved, nor have the failures ever been subjected to analysis or reflection. Emphasis has been put on large-scale schemes, rather than on more modest, long-term programs which would require actual cooperation with the rural masses on the local level (cf. Erasmus, 1952; Friedmann, 1955; De Young, 1958). Many—probably most—foreign planners who have worked in Haiti have never even bothered to learn the national language, let alone the fundamentals of the culture of the Haitian people.

114 In these terms, it is not enough merely to bemoan the feeble institutional structure of Haiti. Some attention, at least, should be given to the striking incapacity of outsiders to deal with that structure creatively. Leyburn's book exacts our respect precisely because its author, unlike most foreign visitors, makes plain that he takes Haiti, and the needs of the Haitian people, seriously.

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668 671 114 * Some observers are less pessimistic than the writer. The sons of the elite, many of them educated abroad, elements of a Social Christian progressive movement, and possibly a few "Castro-left" radicals, may eventually coalesce into a successful opposition, it has been argued. The writer, however, remains unconvinced. Structural changes of the sort wrought by the Castro regime in Cuba were predicated on the existence of mass political opposition to Batista-type government, and on the existence of industrial and rural proletarian sectors organized into large-scale movements. These "preconditions," as I see them, are entirely lacking in Haiti of today.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

[p. xxviii]

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FOREWORD

The United States, embarked upon a policy of good neighborliness toward 648
the other countries of the Western Hemisphere, is beginning to improve 171
its acquaintance with the republics to the south. Most of its efforts at
present are directed toward an understanding of the large and important
powers, such as Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, which, because of their
size and resources, are potentially our greatest allies—or, if we fail in our
policies, our sources of greatest danger. There are, however, twenty republics
to the south of us, many of them small. A truly good neighbor does not
ignore near-by families who are lacking in wealth, even those who are
known to differ among themselves.

Of the twenty Latin-American republics, the second smallest is Haiti. 721
The United States was only twenty years old when the people of this little 648
country (which, for all its diminutive size, had been France's wealthiest 642
colony of the eighteenth century) fought their own war of independence,
and in 1804 founded the second free state in the hemisphere. Haiti has
many claims upon the attention of the United States: its war against
France in 1802–3 was at least a contributing factor in Napoleon's willingness
to sell Louisiana to this country; it was the first independent Negro
state in the modern world; its foreign policy has long been intertwined
with our own; finally, the nineteen-year American Occupation of the
country has brought us into an even closer relationship with Haiti than
independent factors could produce.

When the country was young there was a spate of books trying to 114
answer the question whether a nation ruled by blacks could long endure.
In more recent years, works on the Antillean republic have generally dealt
with single phases of its life, as for example its political relations with the
United States, or its "Voodoo" practices. There is, however, no connected
story of the growth of its social institutions out of the backgrounds of
slavery and French colonial life, or of the slow shaping of these institutions
through the nineteenth century. It is this growth which the present volume 121
undertakes to describe. Political history has been introduced only so far as
necessary to provide the convenient pegs upon which most of us are accus-

121 tomed to hang our knowledge of the growth, development, and decay of social institutions. Whether the book be classified as social history or as sociology is largely a matter of indifference, for the line between those subjects can hardly be drawn without doing violence to comprehensive insight. To view a people with understanding in the characteristic setting of their institutions—marriage, religion, property arrangements, and the rest—one needs not only a description of their ways, but also a knowledge of how they came to be what they are.

167 178 563 Two centuries ago nine tenths of the Negro ancestors of the modern Haitians were still in Africa, living under the mores of their own localities, and for the most part entirely unacquainted with the mores of the Western World (or, as we ethnocentrically call it, the "civilized" world). First transplanted as slaves to the Caribbean island, then gaining their freedom after some mixture of blood with the white French, the Haitians have built up not only a state but a Haitian culture. The problems to be discussed in this book are as follows:

114 What social structure was set up after the independence in 1804, and by what methods? This question calls for a description of the economic, political, religious, marital, and class organization of the Haitians.

How did this structure function during the next century? There is often a difference between a people's expressed intentions and their ability to carry them out: a state sometimes borrows from some other power a type of constitution which, though logically admirable, does not work effectively under local conditions.

Which structural and functional elements of Haitian life were social heritages from the African past; which were taken over from French models; which were mergings of the two, and which seem to be variations newly produced on Haitian soil?

178 The great leaders of early days, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Dessalines, Christophe, Pétion, and Boyer, made an effort to direct Haitian economic and political life along definite lines; however, the pressure of daily life, the necessity of feeding half a million people, most of whom had had no experience in solving complicated problems of any sort, soon made it obvious that logical social structures would not long remain logical. The ways evolved were characteristically Haitian; ways in general unplanned, grow-

ing out of daily needs to make an adjustment to conditions as they were. A 178
century later we can describe, with the wisdom coming from perspective, what people of the time could hardly perceive to be happening.

The people of Haiti have had to endure so much criticism from foreign- 114
ers in past decades that it would be small wonder if they should dread the appearance of another book about their country. Herskovits, Parsons, Montague, Courlander, and other recent American authors, however, have abundantly proved that it is possible to treat the subject in scholarly fashion without wounding sensibilities. Every nation has unsavory items in its history and defects in its present state; this book has no intention of overdramatizing either the past or the present condition of Haiti.

All students who go from the United States to Haiti must sooner or later seek out Dr. Price-Mars, a true gentleman and scholar. He is not only one of the country's foremost intellectuals, but also a man of profound understanding and kindliness. I owe much to his illuminating suggestions, his practical assistance in my enterprise, and his patient answers to my questions. His works, whether historical, sociological, critical, or literary, are indispensable to an understanding of Haiti.

I am grateful likewise to Père Monteil, who during several weeks gave me the benefit of his years of experience among the people of his large parish, and who opened many avenues of research to me. The custodian of the excellent library of the Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne constantly aided my investigation. Père Demers allowed me on occasion to accompany him in his parish work. To all these men, and to the numerous other priests who showed me hospitality, I express my thanks.

It would be impossible to name all the persons who gave me help; yet I cannot forbear to mention former President Eugène Roy; Dr. Camille Lhérisson, a brilliant physician; Dr. J.-C. Dorsainvil, the historian; the directors of the agricultural school at Damien, and of the École Professionelle, École Centrale, and École Normale; M. Jean Fouchard, chef du Cabinet particulier du Président Vincent; M. Jacques Antoine, of the Haitian Legation in Washington; M. Édouard Estève, president of the Chambre du Commerce; Mme. Andrée Marini; M. Victor Montasse; and M. Émile Roy. All of these gave me valuable information, as did many other Haitians of high rank and low. I count it a particular privilege to number

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SV3 Haiti SV3

114 among my sincere friends M. Westen Dauphin, of the Département des Finances, and his charming wife; the memory of their kindly generosity will long remain with me.

On one of my visits to Haiti Prof. John Lobb, of Mount Holyoke College, was my companion, and I owe him gratitude for his keen advice and criticism. Miss Annabel Learned gave much valuable assistance in the preparation of the manuscript. I have also profited from the suggestions of my student and friend, Mr. Alan F. Dill, who read a part of the manuscript of this book.

The true affection I feel for the Haitian people whose institutions I have here described cannot be measured in printed words.

J. G. L.

Yale University.
October, 1941.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966 .
SV3 Haiti SV3

[p. XLvii]

CONTENTS

Introduction by Sidney W. Mintz v
Supplementary Bibliography xxxvii
Foreword xliii

PART I. CASTE AND CLASS

I. The People and Their Country 3
II. French Colonial Origins 14
III. The Formative Years, 1804–1843 32
  1. *Dessalines (1804–1806)*
  2. *Christophe (1807–1820)*
  3. *Pétion (1807–1818)*
  4. *The Final Effort toward Plantation Life*
  5. *Lapse into Peasantry (1827–1843)*
  6. *The Drawing of Caste Lines (1820–1843)*
IV. Caste Lines Become Permanent 88
V. Castes Since the American Occupation of 1915 99

PART II. RELIGION

Introduction 113
VI. Roman Catholicism 115
  1. *French Colonial Backgrounds*
  2. *Catholicism in Independent Haiti*
VII. Vodun 131
  1. *Misconceptions*
  2. *Formative Days*
  3. *Vodun Belief*
  4. *Magic*
VIII. Religious Borrowings 166

PART III. SEX RELATIONS AND HOME LIFE

IX. Historical Backgrounds 177
X. Home Life of the Élite 186
XI. Domestic Life of the Peasants 193

PART IV. POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

XII. Politics 211
XIII. Constitutions and Political Forms 234
XIV. Commerce 250

PART V. MODERN HAITI

XV. Haitian Problems 265
  1. *Overpopulation*
  2. *Health*
  3. *Education*
XVI. Problems of the Élite 285
XVII. Outer Aspects of Haiti 290
XVIII. The Créole Language 297
XIX. Sociological Postscript 305
Notes and Bibliography 313
Index 337

The map of Haiti, preceding the text, shows its five departments, the capitals of its arrondissements, and its position in the Antilles. It was drawn by Robert W. Galvin.

[p. 1]

PART I

CASTE AND CLASS

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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

[p. 1-A]

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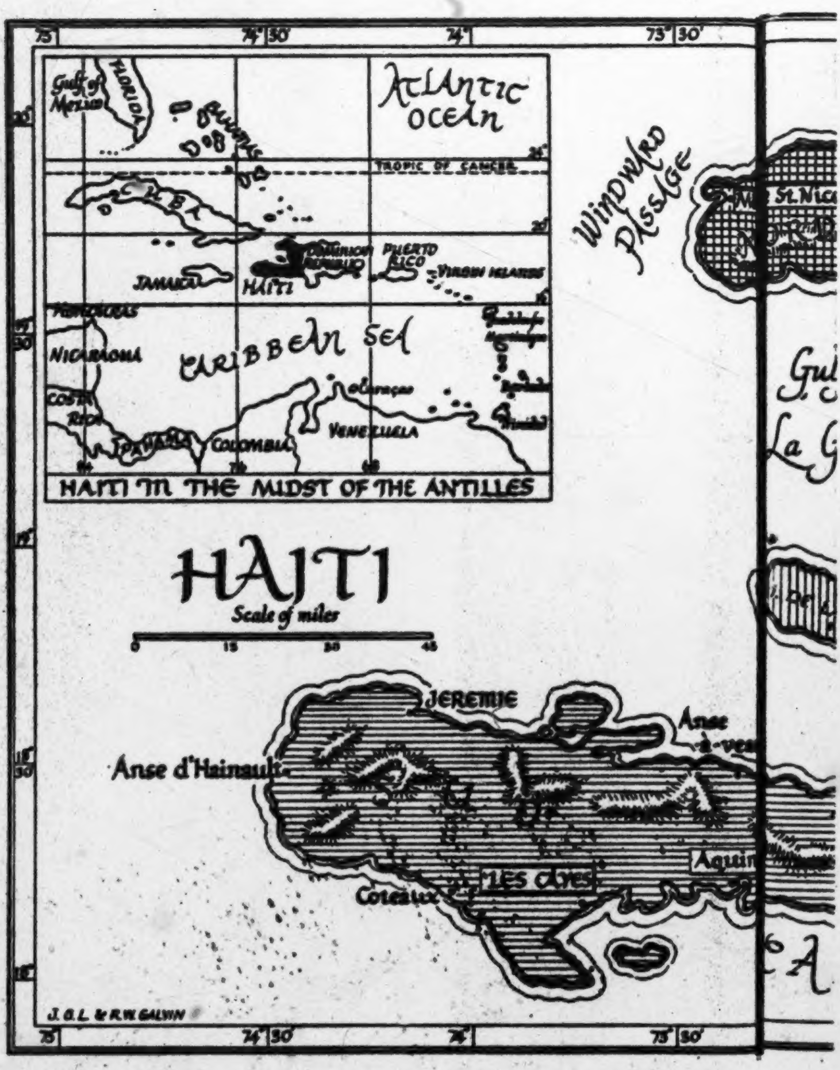
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FLORIDA
BAHAMAS
ATLANTIC OCEAN
TROPIC OF CANCER
CUBA
JAMAICA
HAITI
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
PUERTO RICO
VIRGIN ISLANDS
HONDURAS
NICARAGUA
COSTA RICA
PANAMA
COLOMBIA
VENEZUELA
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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

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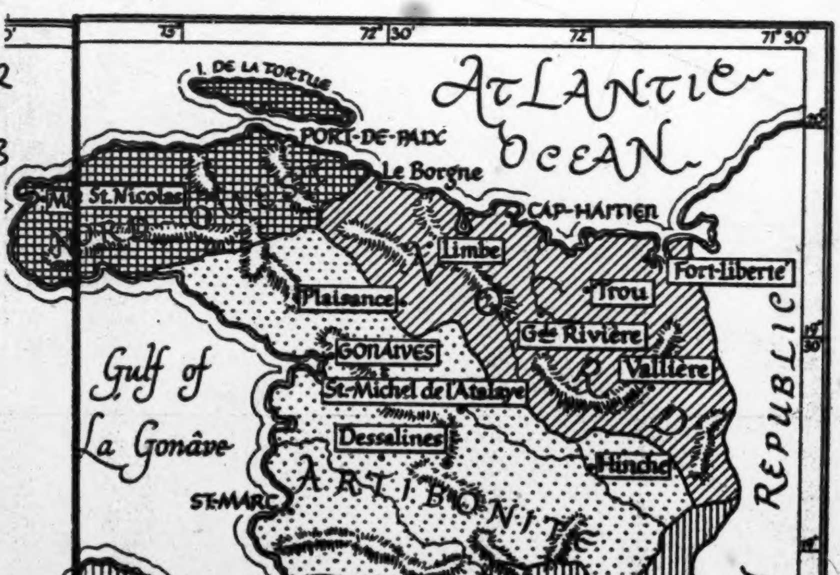

I. DE LA TORTUE
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PORT-DE-PAIX
Le Borgne
CAP-HAITIEN
Mᵗ St. Nicolas
NORD
Limbe
Fort-liberté
Plaisance
Trou
Gᵈᵉ Rivière
GONAIVES
Vallière
St-Michel de l'Atalaye
Gulf of La Gonâve
Dessalines
Hinche
ST-MARC
ARTIBONITE
REPUBLIC
I. DE LA GONAVE
Lascahobas
Mirebalais
DOMINICAN
PORT-AU-PRINCE
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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

I

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR COUNTRY

IN the ten thousand square miles of Haiti's mountains and valleys 161
more than two and a half million people—some say more than
three million—are crowded together. Some are black, some 162
light-skinned, but less than five thousand are white, and these are 144
almost all recent immigrants to the country. Modern Haiti has its 181
racial roots primarily in Africa, but its social roots lie as much in
Europe as in Africa; if it is "American" at all, geography and a few
fairly superficial characteristics are the only American qualities it
displays.

Carrying our own cultural interpretations with us when we visit 829
our Caribbean neighbor, we are likely to misunderstand what we see 576
in Haiti, for it is very easy to think of all colored people in terms of
our own. To do so is to remain completely ignorant of Haiti. Whereas
in the United States we use "Negro" and "colored" indiscriminately
as synonyms, making a real distinction only between "black"
and "mulatto," all four terms are taboo in polite society in Haiti. A
new descriptive vocabulary, an entirely new frame of reference, must
be acquired by the friendly foreign visitor to this West Indian republic.[1]

Probably the most striking phenomenon in the country is its 565
division into two social groups. So rigidly are the class lines set that

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[1] No greater error of tact can be made by visitors to Haiti than to use such commonly 829
accepted American terms as Negro, colored, mulatto, blacks, Africans. Whereas
in the United States such words are employed to describe people with a greater or 576
less degree of Negro blood, in Haiti they are generally regarded as opprobrious epithets,
emphasizing the color of the epidermis as all important, while ignoring the 186
essential matters of culture, standard of living, and social background. Not many Haitians would have the grace to reply, as President Pétion suggested to a subaltern who was incensed at a white man for calling him "un nègre," "Why, then, did you not call him 'un blanc'?" Probably the most offensive of all the terms is *mulâtre*, for it calls attention to miscegenation in the family. The educated people in general regard themselves as darker Frenchmen, not as transplanted Africans. Books about Haiti which refer to the "black republic" seem to them to ignore the important fact that the blacks, though numerically preponderant, do not rule. The visitor must accordingly acquire a new vocabulary of color. It is safer not to make any allusion at all to the matter; but if occasion demands, one speaks of "jaune" and "brun," not white and black.

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SV3 Haiti SV3

565 *caste* is the only word to describe the effective separation of aristocrats
from the masses. The caste system is a vivid fact, for it regulates a
person's profession, speech, religion, marriage, family life, politics,
clothes, social mobility—in short, his whole life from cradle to grave.

175 Haiti won its freedom from the France of Napoleon in 1804,
648 becoming thus the second independent state in the Western Hemisphere.
It had been during the eighteenth century France's most
prosperous colony, its wealth depending upon slavery and the plantation
565 system. With the whites driven out, social distinctions which
642 actually had their roots in colonial times began immediately to
develop among the people, all of whom had some proportion of
African blood in their veins. During the course of the next century
the criteria for aristocracy slowly assumed recognizable form, so that
now even the most casual observer is aware that Haiti cannot by any
stretch of the imagination be called a democratic country, with an
open class system. The two castes are the élite and the masses. They
are as different as day from night, as nobleman from peasant; and
they are as separate as oil and water. The élite are generally reckoned
[162] to compose at the outside not more than three per cent of the
population.

565 The élite do not work with their hands. This is the cardinal rule of
Haitian society. Upon it rests the whole economic structure of the
463 country, and to this the course of national history has led. All the
[461] professions, most governmental and military offices, and the large
business enterprises are effectively closed to young men of the masses.
Indeed, so completely accepted are caste rules, so practically difficult
would it be for peasant youths to acquire the money and education
necessary for such careers, that at birth a boy's future place in economic
life is, within narrow limits, already predetermined. For the
élite, law is the most popular of the professions, partly because it is the
quickest avenue of approach to high political office; government, in
turn, is the only career which can make a man rich within a few
years. Next in popularity to law comes medicine. Teaching is not
lucrative enough to attract many promising youths, and the priests of
the Roman Catholic Church are almost all white Frenchmen.[2]

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793 [2] An effort was once made by the Catholic Church to train native Haitian priests,
but the peasants would have none of them after they were ordained. They drove them
797 out, saying, "Go away! How do you expect God to listen to you? You are not white;
you don't know anything." And the Haitian priests had to be transferred as missionaries
to Africa.

The distinction between castes on the basis of occupation is no- 565
where more clearly seen than in the feminine sphere. The peasant 562
woman, from childhood onward, is an indefatigable laborer, absolutely indispensable to the economic life of the country. She not only performs the usual domestic functions but works in the fields as well. She carries marketable goods, sometimes for miles, to the town for sale. The aristocratic woman, on the other hand, is rarely active in business. Indeed, until very recent years no career was open to her outside the home, nor would custom have allowed her to follow one; even now, teaching and a few clerical positions in government service are her only business opportunities. She directs the household economy but has servants if she can possibly afford them. Her place is definitely in the home.

The second infallible test of membership in the élite caste is educa- 565
tion and an ability to speak French. When Haiti was a slave colony 197
belonging to France, the hundreds of thousands of blacks imported from Africa had no common tongue, coming as they did from wide stretches of the continent; the French spoken by their overseers, a development of the Norman dialect,[3] became their one language, known as Créole. Every Haitian, high and low, knows and uses this language, for nursemaids speak it to the upper-class children in their charge, and all servants speak it. The élite consequently learn it at a tender age, and must use it in all their dealings with the lower orders. Among themselves, however, they speak French. The official language of the country is French. To speak correct French is an immediate announcement that one has had the advantage of schooling and
has been in contact with the aristocracy. Theoretically, Haitian edu- [871]
cation is free and democratic; actually, no peasant child could be spared from labor long enough for schooling, or find money for proper clothes to go to school in.

Inevitably the standard of living is a reflection of caste member- 565
ship. "The élite wear shoes," explained General Butler laconically to 511
the United States Senate investigating committee, when asked what characterized the classes of Haiti. His elliptical remark is true. Peasants, indeed, could not afford to purchase shoes, but more particularly they could not afford to dress up to the standard set by the shoes. When a man of the masses dons the castoff shoes of some aristocrat, the logical assumption by everyone is that this man is pre-

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[3] See chap. XVIII.

565 511 paring to try to move one step up the social ladder. Shoes are a symbol: wearing these, one must also wear a suit instead of a faded shirt and patched trousers; the suit demands personal cleanliness and a better home; all these lead the country man to town life with its additional expenses. So arduous a climb does not allure many of the Haitian common folk.

565 181 Because the standard of living, with its tangibles and intangibles, clearly separates the castes, the élite observe all the rules with rigor. Their etiquette is formal. Culture (in the popular, not the anthropological meaning) is respected with almost religious devotion.

Since the maintenance of a high standard of living is costly, it is
565 obvious that another source of caste distinction lies in the inequalities
511 of wealth and property. Wealth is a relative term, however, and the
434 Haitian peasant is so poor that by contrast a few hundred dollars'
income a year will seem like riches. The élite live economically by
American standards, yet even parsimonious spending of money may,
when governed by a consciousness of social distinctions, make the
peak of aristocracy unassailable.

565 369 The élite live in towns. Many of them own country estates, but regard these as secondary to their residences in Port-au-Prince, Pétionville, Cap-Haïtien, Jérémie, and the other few towns. To live a rural life is to be isolated, out of the stream of fashion, news, social activity. What profession can one follow in a rustic valley? One who is class-conscious must see and be seen by others of his class, otherwise he would be forgotten by "those who count." In the towns are the schools; there French is spoken; there, and there only, financial and social opportunities exist. True, plebeians form the majority of the population even in the towns, so that urbanization alone is not a mark of caste; it must be taken in conjunction with the others.

565 581 Formal marriage is another requisite for membership in the élite. As will shortly be apparent, sex relations in Haiti are quite casual, as judged by American standards. The majority of Haitian families are established by parents who have gone through neither a civil nor a religious ceremony. This is not to imply that spouses are unfaithful to each other, or that there is not mutual respect within the family circle; it merely means that most people regard formal marriage as a luxury which they cannot afford, or in any case as a ceremony which custom has made superfluous. Once again, however, the aristocrat holds to the form. If a family can point to legal marriages among

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several generations of ancestors, there can be little question of its high social position.

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Religion affords still another distinction between high and low. Haiti has a folk religion which American tourists call Voodoo (a name which makes them think immediately of superstitious emotionalism or some kind of occult balderdash), but which is more properly called Vodun. It is a true religion in that it answers for the native the questions arising in the world he knows, while giving him confidence to face the crises of life. Vodun is African in origin, Créole in its language, and homely in its creed and practice; none of these makes it any less a religion. The official religion of the country, on the other hand, is Roman Catholicism. Few members of the élite, however their hearts may yearn for the consoling securities of Vodun, dare openly either to acknowledge their "service" or to participate in the cult. They must be Catholics or agnostics. It is often remarked that below the surface many a professing Catholic aristocrat cherishes Vodun beliefs; the important fact is that he keeps his folk worship secret. Because the outside world ridicules Vodun as superstition, and because the approved Catholic Church fights it, government restrictions effectively keep its ritual out of the public gaze. All the discriminatory laws, however, have not weakened its hold upon the masses. It is because Vodun is a *folk* religion that the élite cannot permit themselves to adhere to it openly.

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The final and most complicated distinction between the two castes is skin color. Any generalization on this matter is open to numerous exceptions; moreover, the whole question of color in Haiti touches the most sensitive nerves of the upper classes. One must begin by such casual observations as these: the vast majority of the lower orders are definitely dark or even black; the lighter the skin, the more likely a person is to belong to the élite. It is true that there are black aristocrats, and it is equally true that numbers of peasants have light complexions. At almost any function in high society, however, the proportion of dark-skinned persons is decidedly small. Among the youth, the tendency is always to select a spouse whose skin color is light; marriages are often made between aristocrats and white foreigners resident in Haiti, so that the children may lighten the family complexion. While it is therefore inaccurate to assert that no full-blooded Negroes belong to the élite, it is also clear that lighter persons tend to have social advantages.

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565 171 Modern usage, having borrowed the word "caste" from India, employs it loosely to mean a rigid class system of which the people are conscious.[4] In India caste was always endogamous and connected with occupation. Kroeber defines it as "an endogamous and hereditary division of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions."[5] Castes, as distinguished from social classes, "have emerged into social consciousness to the point where custom and law attempt their rigid and permanent separation from one another." By each of these criteria Haiti has castes.

565 582 [463] [461] The élite are endogamous in that they would not consider marriage into the masses. The one exception to the endogamic practice is marriage with a white foreigner. Whereas in India all members of a caste had the same general occupation, in Haiti several occupations are open to caste members; but the distinction between honorable and demeaning work is understood by all, so that no person has free choice as regards the two larger categories. Haitian law does not name the social divisions, nor does it legislate the masses into a subordinate position[6]—for the simple reason that there is no conceivable need to enact what already exists. The laws of Haiti are administered by élite officials; these men make the definitions and interpretations. The judge always knows the custom, so that (as in most countries) the same offense brings different penalties for upper- and lower-class offenders. Custom holds sway, and custom is more tyrannical than any body of law.

Inside the castes may be found social distinctions familiar in democracies and in every other kind of society. Interest in politics, business, literature, or sport draws people of like minds together and makes cliques. There are well-to-do families who outshine their neighbors, just as there are peasant landholders who dominate their rural communities. A high civil official has more prestige than a doctor with a small practice, just as among the masses a house servant for an élite family outranks a beggar.

565 511 105 185 For the majority of Haitians, life is too elemental to be concerned with artificial wants. The peasant talks, unfettered by rules of gram-

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[4] See also W. Lloyd Warner, "American Caste and Class," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLII, No. 2 (Sept. 1936), 234–237; and John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (New Haven, 1937), pp. 62 ff.

[5] A. L. Kroeber, "Caste," in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, III, 254.

[6] Such efforts were made, however, in the early days of the republic. See chap. III.

mar or any schoolmaster's correction; he behaves like his fellows; he 565
learns by trial and error, by imitation, by the praise and ridicule of 511
his elders, what to do and what not to do. What really matters in life 105
is having food to eat, avoiding bad luck in health and crops, having a 185
wife and family, keeping on the right side of the spirits, and being able at night to dance, sing, and tell tales with his friends. He wears no tight-fitting clothes, never bothers about fashions, certainly never puzzles his brain to reconcile his theological and philosophical views with each other. This is by no means a poetic or idyllic existence for him, however. The peasant is so poor that misfortune may be catastrophic; the soil he has to farm is worn out by decades of erosion and crude tillage; disease is so widespread that most people know misery. A man cannot, even if he would, save up for a rainy day; he lacks the necessary implements to plough deep while sluggards sleep. One is safe so long as he does what everyone else does, and if this rule breaks down, at least misery will have company. Keep out of harm's way if possible, but bear it stoically when it comes. Avoid what is strange—particularly all legal documents, courts, politics, city ways, and people who shout orders. The peasant is conservative because radical changes, such as come from revolutions, for example, dislocate his life, leaving him worse off than before. Progress and improvement are to him only vague abstractions, much less real than the struggle for mere existence.

For the élite, on the other hand, life is rather a struggle to maintain 565
and improve the standard of living. It is always easier to predict what 511
a person will not do than what he will. It would be hard to define, 185
therefore, a typical aristocrat. In one basic matter, however, the high-class Haitian is poles removed from the peasant: instead of accepting things as they are ("*Bon Dieu bon,*" runs the peasant saying: God is good—and the inflection of the voice implies that the second "bon" may also mean "inscrutable"), the élite person is restlessly dissatisfied with the conditions of life: economic, social, political. His unexpressed ideal is to be accepted as an equal in the cultured circles of Western society, to have the same entrée to courts, clubs, and parties abroad as cultivated white Europeans and Americans.

Since the country has never had an accurate census, it is not pos- 162
sible to say precisely how many persons belong to each caste. By the 565
most generous estimates not one out of twenty-five Haitians is élite— 369
and such a figure stretches the category to a point which no literate

162 565 369 citizen would admit. The few cities and towns of Haiti do not contain more than 250,000 people in a total population which the atlases generally put around 2,500,000. Since to live in the city is one necessary mark of aristocracy, and since obviously not every town- or city-dweller is an aristocrat, it is probably nearer the mark to infer that not more than two or three per cent of the people are of the élite.

565 554 A slightly larger group would fit neither category. This intermediate section would consist chiefly of those who have taken a few steps toward the upper stratum; they may wear shoes and keep a small shop and speak a few words of French, but not yet be accepted in "respectable" society; aristocrats will look down on them while the masses will regard them with curious interest. Yet these are not what Europeans would call a middle class. In their own generation, they are rootless and insecure. Their children will have as many advantages as the parents can afford, so that the next generation may increase the distance between itself and the common folk. Included in this intermediate group are also a few who, having once been up, are now on the way down.

433 162 If the terms "masses" and "peasants" are used interchangeably in these pages, it is because the vast majority of the people get their living from the soil. Haiti is, as it has always been, an agricultural country. The end-paper map lists all towns which claim as many as 7,500 people; only one, the capital, Port-au-Prince, has more than 100,000.[7]

162 184 105 At least nine out of ten Haitians, therefore, lead rural lives, and easily fit the designation of peasant. They live in little communities, generally of less than a hundred persons, rather than in scattered houses. A detailed map would be dotted with place names of these

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[162] [114] [7] The estimates made by Woodring, in his *Geology of the Republic of Haiti*, p. 67, are as follows:

Port-au-Prince	125,000	Saint-Marc	10,000
Cap-Haïtien	20,000	Jacmel	10,000
Les Cayes	15,000	Port-de-Paix	7,500
Gonaïves	12,000	Jérémie	7,500

It should be noted that all eight of these towns, which by Woodring's estimate have a total of 207,000, are seaports. The country is so mountainous that no cities have grown up in the interior. The map also includes a number of towns smaller than 7,500: these are capitals of *arrondissements* or seats of courts. Woodring remarks that if the people who live in towns having a population of more than a thousand were added to the list above, the total "urban" population then would be between 225,000 and 250,000, which is barely ten per cent of the total in the country.

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tiny communities, some of them designating "villages" of only four 162
or five houses. For numbers of peasants hidden away in the valleys or 184
on mountain farms, the only contact with the larger world comes 105
through visits to the nearest market town—which itself may count
only a thousand souls. The peasant is thus effectively isolated. The [434]
American Financial Adviser to the Government has estimated the
average *annual* income of the Haitian at $20 a head.[8] The smallness of
the sum limits the material contacts of the peasant with the outside
world. Rural schools are few,[9] consequently all but a small percentage [871]
of the rising generation is growing up illiterate. Lack of mental
stimulus completes the isolation. Bound to the soil by the need of
wresting a livelihood from rocky, gullied, and increasingly unproductive
land, harassed by ill-health, and governed by a group whose
own security would be threatened by improving his lot, it is little
wonder that the peasant is unprogressive, or that he struggles along
at a bare subsistence level.[10]

Haiti is rural and agricultural, then, with a population density of 105
about 250 per square mile. The people, living without machine in- 161
dustry and with very little foreign trade, must get their living from 433
10,000 square miles, not of lush tropical soil but of rocky, moun- 134
tainous country which, after a century and a half of poor farming,
has been stripped of most of its forests and much of its topsoil.

A glance at a relief map of the West Indies would show clearly 133
that the islands are the tops of a mountain range, whose lowlands were long since submerged by the Caribbean Sea. Looked at from above, Haiti seems a jumbled mass of mountains running in all directions.[11] Down their slopes flow many small streams which after

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[8] Dr. W. W. Cumberland, cited by Paul H. Douglas, "The American Occupation of Haiti," *Political Science Quarterly*, XLII (1927), 258. [113]

[9] The average monthly salary of $13 (until recently only $6) for rural schoolteachers would not draw many wide-awake young men, even if schoolhouses existed for classes. The salary, indeed, is so small that only inferior persons are attracted, often men who know little more than their pupils. See chap. XV, 3. [875]

[10] Mrs. Blair Niles, in *Black Haiti* (New York, 1926), pp. 185-186, tells of a prisoner who preferred to remain in jail rather than be freed. "When he gets out," she quotes the officer as saying, "he'll be in again. You'll see. Here he gets nine cents a day for food, an' that's more than the average Haitian ever has." [114] [434]

[11] One can well believe the story (told by Ebenezer D. Bassett, *Haiti* [Washington, 1893], p. 3) of the English admiral who, asked by George III for a description of the island, crumpled a sheet of paper, threw it on the table, and said: "Sire, Haiti looks like that." The same tale is told of Puerto Rico, with a Spanish admiral speaking to Queen Isabella.

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133 rains become torrents, washing away crops and soil. Brooks which run most of the year the Haitians dignify by the name of "rivière"; not even the largest, however—the Artibonite, which drains over a fifth of the country—is navigable for anything above a rowboat. The second largest "river," Les Trois Rivières, is only 96 kilometres long. Many of the smaller streams disappear into sinkholes or caves in limestone, veritable lost rivers. Even some of the lakes are ephemeral.

133 Most of the best land of the country lies in its few plains flanking
3// the mountains near the coasts, or extending like wedges into the
mountainous regions. In the northeast in the country back of Cap-
175 Haïtien is the Plaine du Nord; here in colonial times were the most
[134] flourishing of the French plantations, the palatial residences, and the
slaves who in 1791 began the insurrection which ultimately led to Haiti's independence. In the middle region are the Artibonite Plain near the coast, and the Central Plain back of the Black Mountains. Eastward from Port-au-Prince, the capital, is the Cul-de-Sac; and in the southwestern peninsula is the small plain of Les Cayes. All over the country in French days sugar cane grew in abundance, making white men wealthy. The irrigation systems have long since disappeared; fertilizer is far too costly for use; trees have been cut down to make room for hundreds of tiny farms to support the increasing population.

133 Not even all the plains are naturally productive. Many of them, on
134 the contrary, are arid, sterile, and forbidding, covered with cacti and
other spiny plants. Indeed, the most arid areas of Haiti, including its salt marshes, are lowlands.

13 Although the country is wholly in the tropics, the usual preconceived notion of the tropics does not apply. There are no impenetrable rain forests or jungles, no wild beasts, and very few snakes.
132 Because of the mountains, there are wide differences in rainfall, soil, and vegetation, within a short distance. Occasional hurricanes do great damage to shipping and the water fronts. Infrequent droughts sometimes last for two or three months. Hailstorms that damage growing crops are fairly common. Taken as a whole, the country has an ample but not heavy rainfall; coming generally from the east and northeast, the trade winds strike the high ridges in the north and there deposit the greater part of their moisture in the Plaine du Nord. By the time they have passed down the western slope and across the Central Plain they are dried and rarefied, so that this region becomes

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increasingly arid as its altitude decreases. Next to the Plaine du Nord, the best-watered part of Haiti is the southwestern peninsula, which projects far beyond the shelter of the mountains in the rest of the island. 132

When one subtracts from the 10,000 square miles all the sterile wastes of cactus, the salt marshes and brackish lakes, and the rock barrens, one realizes the inevitability of a low standard of living for the mass of the people. Other nations buy little from Haiti, local industries never reach even the proportions familiar to small-town Americans, and the total national budget is less than seven million dollars a year. Not even the élite are well-to-do by American small-town standards; it is only by comparison with the masses that they can be said to constitute a favored economic class. They rule the country, however, and what benefits accrue to Haiti rarely get beyond their pockets. 433 [439] [651] [565]

The resident of Haiti can never lose sight of the social distinctions between the two castes, for they permeate every phase of Haitian life. It has been so since the first hours of the republic. Indeed, the origins of the caste system lie in the French colonial days of the eighteenth century. 565 175 178

II

FRENCH COLONIAL ORIGINS

175 648 FRANCE'S wealthiest colony in 1791 was, and had been for decades, the small territory of Saint-Domingue, as Haiti was known at that time. It had belonged to France for less than a century. French freebooters and buccaneers of the seventeenth century actually presented the colony to their mother country, for these sea rovers, harrying the Spanish Main, used as a base for their predatory raids the small island of Tortuga (La Tortue, The Turtle) off the northern coast of Haiti. They often came over to the western part of the large Spanish island of Santo Domingo (Haiti), then almost deserted, to shoot wild cattle for food; then they would hasten back to Tortuga for safety. At first Tortuga had been shared by English, Dutch, and French buccaneers, but gradually the French came to outnumber the others, so that when the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 concluded the War of the Grand Alliance, France claimed and Spain ceded the western third of the island of Santo Domingo. The English and Dutch were meanwhile picking up other Caribbean fragments of the decaying Spanish Empire.

175 563 24 The early years of this new French colony were unimpressive, the majority of its residents being former buccaneers, who could hardly have regarded agricultural life as other than dull, and who certainly did not make successful farmers. Only when new immigrants from France in the seventeen-twenties demonstrated that steady profits could be made by raising indigo, sugar, coffee, and cocoa, all of which flourished in the region, did the era of prosperity begin.
[464] Plantations were soon staked out all over Saint-Domingue. The great
[439] problem was to find adequate labor for the fields. Whoever had
crops to sell was sure of a ready market, but crops would not grow
175 without cultivation. Since there were no natives in Saint-Domingue
24 for the French planters to exploit, the colonizers chose the other
567 favorite alternative of the eighteenth century: Negro slavery. In the
1710's Saint-Domingue began to compete with England's North
American colonies for the cargo of the steady stream of slave ships
from Africa. There is no indication that the supply of blacks ever

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175 equaled the demand for them; in 1791 the census listed half a million
24 then living, but no writer seems to have even a vague idea of how
567 many millions were imported during the sixty years of the colony's heyday.

175 Production, particularly of sugar and coffee, steadily increased
until the tiny colony ranked among the wealthiest regions of the
245 world. The Spanish Indies were declining, so that Saint-Domingue
249 alone far outranked them all combined between 1766 and 1791.
433 Splendid roads were built, extensive irrigation projects developed,
511 and stately mansions erected. Life moved along with ceremony and
565 display—for the planters; attended by their black lackeys, the white
French masters entertained royally or were driven like lords in their coaches to make formal visits to neighbors. Many of these well-to-do colonials spent half their time in Paris, ostentatiously spending their riches. To be "wealthy as a Creole" came to be a common expression in France.[1] Perhaps nowhere in the Americas was existence at once so delightful and so ornamental as it was for the wealthy planters among the 36,000 whites of Saint-Domingue in 1791.

175 For the mother country, too, this small bit of tropical land was
profitable during the latter days of Bourbon royalty. Neither Mar-
439 tinique nor Guadeloupe could compare with it in value. In 1789
505 nearly two thirds of the foreign commercial interests of France
648 centred in Saint-Domingue; its combined exports and imports were valued at more than $140,000,000; its sugar, coffee, indigo, and cotton supplied the home market and employed in prosperous years more than 700 ocean-going vessels, with as many as 80,000 seamen.[2]

175 Where wealth exists, social distinctions generally develop. In
Saint-Domingue the evolving class system produced such discord
565 that sparks from the French Revolution eventually set off an explo-
669 sion in the colony. Casual surveys of Haitian history generally record that in 1791 the slaves revolted, and that out of this insurrection grew the war of independence. This is true; but it was not the resentment of slaves against their masters which caused the final explosion; the
175 slaves were tinder used by others to keep the conflagration burning.
565 Negro slaves, of course, did not figure in the "class" system; they
[567] were below the classes of colonial society. The class system, properly

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[101] [1] The word "creole" means only "colonial born"; there is no connotation of race mixture in the term.

[2] Pamphile de Lacroix, *Mémoires*, II, 277.

175 speaking, consisted of the three groups known as *grands blancs, petits blancs,* and *gens de couleur.*[3] Although no precise English term will
565 translate either of the first two categories, the former embraced the important whites—owners of large plantations, wealthy merchants, and high officials of the state; the latter designated all other whites of the colony—shopkeepers, artisans, small planters with only a few slaves, little people busily engaged in social climbing, and shiftless whites lazily slipping downhill. The 28,000 gens de couleur included all free persons who had African blood in their veins.

It is highly probable that without this third group there would have been no violent outbreak in 1791, no achievement of final independence in 1804, and no such caste system as exists in Haiti at the present time.

175 That there were free people of color in the colony was due to a code of laws emanating from Louis XIV, who died in 1715, years
567 before Saint-Domingue had shown any signs of becoming prosper-
641 ous. In 1685 the Grand Monarch had issued a Code Noir to cover all
648 colonial dealings with Negro slaves. Article 59 specified that when a slave secured his liberty, either by cash purchase or by gift of his white master or parent, he was to be regarded as a full French citizen. He might own land, dispose of his wealth as he pleased, bear testimony in legal cases (even against whites), marry as he pleased, vote, bear arms, travel where he wished, embrace any career, own slaves or free them. To Louis and his ministers such provisions probably did not seem particularly magnanimous, for race prejudice was not a characteristic of the French, and it could hardly have been supposed that enough slaves would ever be freed to create much of a problem.

175 In the course of the next hundred years, however, many persons of
563 color in the colony achieved their freedom, and with it French citi-
641 zenship. The greatest number had been granted their liberty because they were the children of white masters by Negro mothers—for race mixture is always a concomitant of white ownership of black slaves.
[595] Concubinage was so regularly practiced in Saint-Domingue that it was considered quite normal. If many of the first freedmen were
563 mulattoes (half-white, half-Negro), by 1791 their descendants might
175 be quadroons, octoroons, or near-whites, for consciousness of skin

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[3] The gens de couleur were also often called *affranchis,* freedmen, a term which strictly would be inaccurate as applied to a free colored person of the second or third generation.

color predisposed a freedman to separate himself, by marriage with a 563
person at least as light as himself, as far as possible from his slave 175
ancestors.[4]

Aside from paternity, the chief reasons for freeing a slave were 175
faithful or extraordinary service, and the readiness of a master to free
his concubine. By the time of the Revolution many of the free colored 567
people had not known slavery in their families for four generations, while still more had been free for two or three. During the century many had acquired wealth by inheritance from former
owners. Their close association with well-to-do white planters had [556]
instilled in them the desire to improve their economic fortunes as well as their culture; friendly relationships with their benefactors afforded them the opportunity. Like the grands blancs, the prosperous gens de couleur sent their children to Paris for an education, and went there themselves for pleasure.

As the free colored people flourished, so also did the jealousy of the 175
petits blancs against them. "Society" in Saint-Domingue was beset, 565
as is any social system which has not yet the sanctity of long tradition, with heartburnings, intrigues, resentment, snobbery. Petit blanc aspired to become grand blanc; small planter longed to be received into the smart set of the wealthy plantation owners; creole resented the toplofty airs of the recent émigré from France. What was more irksome to the petit blanc than his own exclusion from high society was the acceptance into it of many colored people whose parents or grandparents had been African slaves. Since many of the gens de couleur were better educated and more cultured than the lower-class whites, inner consciousness of mental inferiority may have added fuel to the fires of jealousy.

The growing wealth of free colored people was notable in the latter years of the century. One fertile parish in the South (Jérémie) was almost entirely in their hands, while in every other part of the colony they had bought or inherited handsome plantations. They looked upon Saint-Domingue as their fatherland, not hoping (as did many of the whites) to retire to France to spend their fortunes, nor yearning (as did many slaves) to return to Africa. The less ambitious

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[4] Certain colonial writers diverted themselves by working out all the mathematical 114
combinations of blood mixture, with names for scores of the commoner varieties.
Since people with some part of white blood in their veins might mate with others of 565
their own kind, with lighter or with darker persons, with black or with white, it can be imagined how complicated the question of race mixture might become.

175 took their place in the business life of the towns, sending their children
565 to parish schools. Colored youths served in the colonial constabulary and in the militia, acquiring a knowledge of arms and warfare later to be useful to them.

175 Estimates of their wealth vary. Some say that in 1791 they owned a
565 third of all the land in the colony and a fourth of all the slaves; others
423 more conservative put the figure at one fifth of each. Even this is
567 impressive enough to account for much of the growing jealousy of
162 their position. And by 1791 the whites outnumbered them only ten to seven.[5]

562 White women in general added their support to a movement instigated
595 by the petits blancs for discrimination against all gens de
couleur. Many wives felt resentment against the colored people because
563 of the frequency with which their husbands took colored mistresses.[6]
175 Moreover, the wealth of the colony attracted an immigration
581 of Frenchwomen with marriageable but undowered daughters—in the candid French phrase, "*de filles à marier et sans dot*"—who seem to have assumed that young planters would want white French wives, even though impecunious ones. It was a shock to quite a number of them to discover that a colonial youth might prefer a colored girl
175 who brought a dowry with her.[7]

565 Indiscreet affranchis often gave additional grounds for resentment
against their group. Wishing to dissociate themselves altogether
829 from their Negro ancestry and to be assured of social eminence, some accounted for their dark complexions by reference to obscure Indian progenitors. On this ground many secured letters patent from local government officials, of course on payment of a fee, legally estab-

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162 [5] The census listed 40,000 whites to 28,000 colored. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description . . . de la partie française . . . de Saint-Domingue* (Philadelphia, 1797), I, 285, gave the following figures for 1790:

	Square Leagues	*Population*	*Whites*	*Affranchis*	*Slaves*
North	480	195,000	16,000	9,000	170,000
West	820	194,000	14,000	12,500	168,000
South	186	130,000	10,000	6,500	114,000
Totals	1,486	519,000	40,000	28,000	452,000

[6] One governor reported to Paris that he considered sexual jealousy the greatest cause of unrest in the colony.

[7] See Sir Harry H. Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (New York, 1910), p. 141.

lishing their freedom from the taint of any black admixture. Having 175
entered white society by such means, and further diluted their 565
Negro blood by judicious marriages, these social climbers frequently 829
became the most pitiless masters of slaves in the colony, the most [556]
rigid sticklers for a color line, ruthless enemies of recent freedmen
and of those who acknowledged the dark strain in their blood; and
having now "passed over" as whites, they snubbed the petits blancs.

The rising tide of color prejudice became apparent in the passage 175
of discriminatory laws. The first of any importance was enacted by 671
the representative Council of the colony, sitting at the capital, Cap 565
Français, in 1758. It prohibited all colored people, except police and
militiamen, from carrying swords, sabres, or other side arms—thus
denying them one of the outward marks of gentlemen. Four years
later the prohibition was extended to the bearing of all firearms,
except in service, while in 1767 the sale of munitions to colored persons
was forbidden unless ordered by a white officer. Obviously the
instigators of prejudice had by this time won a number of ruling
grands blancs to the notion that the presence of numerous people of
color might constitute a menace to the physical safety of the whites.

Louis XV, the reigning monarch, took no steps to enforce the 175
liberal provisions of the Code Noir of his grandfather; on the contrary, 648
he seems to have favored the passage of discriminatory laws. 563
He made it difficult for colored planters to travel freely in France. 671
The colonial perpetrators of indignities to the gens de couleur, seeing
the success of their first efforts, began to propose increasingly severe
restrictions, and were gratified by Louis XV's official "Instructions to
Administrators" (1771), which stressed the necessity of maintaining
a line between the two races which colored people and their descendants
might never cross.

For the next two decades the affranchi had to face openly avowed 175
discrimination. One by one his rights in the Code were abrogated. 565
He might not fill any responsible office either in the courts or the 563
militia, for that would elevate him above white persons. Certain 671
careers, such as goldsmithing, were closed to him, because they
brought wealth; others, notably medicine and the apothecary's art,
were forbidden on the ground that whites might be poisoned;[8] law
and religion were barred to him because of their public and honorific

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[8] It was a common belief in slave colonies that all persons with Negro blood had some "instinctive" knowledge of the science and art of poisoning. [829]

175 nature.[9] Colored women were forbidden in 1768 to marry white
563 men. In 1779 began a series of laws designed to humiliate the colored
565 person in public: his clothes must be of a different material and cut
from the white person's; he must be indoors by nine o'clock in the
671 evening; he might not sit in the same section of churches and theatres
with whites.[10]

175 Just at the moment when prejudice and hatred seem to have
648 reached their most menacing proportions, when even moderate
829 white planters began to feel that such passions had been aroused
[669] among both white and colored folk that only brutal severity could
hold them in check, the Revolution began in France. Both sides in
[565] the colony hoped to make use of it. The whites saw in the mother
country's confusion an opportunity to win self-government for the
colony—with themselves, of course, as the untrammeled rulers. The
gens de couleur, taking to heart the noble Declaration of the Rights
of Man, hoped to regain their full rights as French citizens, guaranteed to them in Louis XIV's Code, but now in abeyance.

175 During the fateful years 1788 to 1793 colonial affairs were inter-
646 twined with developments in France. Men and messages went back
and forth between Cap Français and Paris, following the startling
648 announcement that after a lapse of 150 years the States-General
671 would be convoked in May, 1789. At a meeting of the colonial assembly in September, 1788, called to nominate delegates, the group of grands blancs who controlled colonial affairs decided on two daring steps, which later proved to be blunders: first, they named thirty-seven deputies to represent Saint-Domingue; second, they drew up a *Cahier des Doléances*—a list of grievances whose sole palliation, it was implied, would be the granting of permission to the white planters to govern the colony without interference from France. These two decisions, be it said, were not unanimously approved in the assembly at Cap Français; cautious minds warned against pretentious demands which might do nothing more than attract concentrated attention to the state of affairs in Saint-Domingue: it might be wiser, they argued, to let sleeping dogs lie, and ignore the convocation of the States-General. The cautious were outvoted.

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[565] [829] [9] A colored lawyer might win a case against a white man; a colored priest might have to hear the confession of a white woman.

[565] [10] When certain mulattoes arrived at church in Cap Français wearing clothes of the same texture as the whites', constables tore the garments from the backs of male and female alike, leaving them "with no other veil than their shame."

At Paris the following May, therefore, the thirty-seven delegates 175
presented themselves. Only six were admitted as deputies. And the 648
colonial skeptics proved correct in their apprehensions: revolutionary
France soon became very much interested in the state of affairs in
Saint-Domingue.

There had recently been formed in Paris a humanitarian group, 175
considered at the time to be ultra-radical, whose announced purpose 648
was the complete abolition of Negro slavery in all French posses-
sions. Following the principle of demanding much in order to gain 567
something, these *Amis des Noirs* concentrated their most serious 668
efforts on regaining for colored colonial freedmen their former
political rights. The recently promulgated "Rights of Man" made it
very difficult for the French National Assembly[11] to deny the proposal of the Amis;[12] moreover, at this juncture the colored landlords of Saint-Domingue sent to Paris an offer to make the new French Republic a free gift of one fifth of their wealth on condition of being no longer subject to the creole tyranny of caste.

The strategical blunder of the self-assertive white planters having 175
now become entirely apparent to their deputies in Paris, these left no 642
stone unturned to thwart the objective of the Amis des Noirs. By 648
indefatigable manoeuvring they at least partially succeeded, for the
National Assembly passed an ambiguous resolution which, while
apparently granting political rights to colored people, nevertheless
left the interpretation of the grant to already existing colonial
authorities.

In the colony complete confusion reigned when news of the resolution was received. Colored people everywhere joyfully demanded their rights, only to be indignantly refused. The whites, with no intention of yielding an inch, were nevertheless undecided as to a proper course of action to pursue: one group wished to announce the colony's immediate independence from France, offering the familiar argument that only white planters knew how to manage the colony's peculiar affairs; the other group still cautiously counseled inaction and waiting for the storm to blow over. A young mulatto, Ogé, educated in France and encouraged by the Amis des

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[11] The National Assembly had succeeded the States-General.

[12] The Assembly was finding "liberté, égalité, fraternité" as uncomfortable a motto to live up to as Americans were finding their own declaration, in 1776, of belief in the "self-evident" proposition that *all men* are created free and equal.

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SV3 Haiti SV3

175 648 642 Noirs, having returned to Saint-Domingue to campaign for the political rights of his group, led with his friend Chavanne a demonstration at Cap Français. The white authorities seized and executed them with notable brutality.

175 648 563 565 This occurred in March, 1791. In May came the news that the National Assembly in France had finally yielded to pressure, and had decreed that men of mixed blood born of free parents should be admitted to representation in colonial assemblies. The chagrin and anger of the whites at this decree was so violent that the governor-general of Saint-Domingue immediately suspended its operation. 175 567 669 The issue was now clearly drawn: free colored men knew that they would never secure their rights except by force. But before they could bring to maturity their plan of action, suddenly the calculations of both parties were completely upset. The Negro slaves revolted.

If ever slaves had reason to rebel, the Negroes of Saint-Domingue did. The same harshness which the whites showed to free colored people marked the treatment of black slaves; and as racial antagonism deepened, white masters seemed to become utterly heartless in their treatment of the inarticulate blacks. Allowing for the exceptions which accompany most generalizations, it is clear from the record that the planters were, in the main, callous, ruthless, some of them even fiendish, in their treatment of slaves. Flogging a man to death was not uncommon; certain slaves were buried alive; pregnant women were forced to work so hard that miscarriage resulted. Some of the punishments meted out were merely brutal; others were torture; and some were sadistic, the masters relishing the pain they were causing. A certain slave in the North was nailed by his hands to a wall, and then, after standing all day in the burning sun, was made to eat his own amputated ears. A woman planter had the tongues of all her slaves cut out; another woman caused the starvation of her maid by having a gag fixed around the child's head.[13] Visitors to the colony in the 1780's often commented on the general want of self-control on the part of the planters—their violent gusts of anger and passionate outbreaks over trifles; and the victims of these outbursts were the slaves. Most of the blacks accordingly needed only leadership to arouse them and direct their vengeance. 175 567 669

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[13] An officer of the court of the Negro king Christophe later wrote in two volumes a gruesome account of the treatment of slaves by French masters in the latter days of the colony. Although certainly exaggerated, it probably contains a measure of truth. See Baron de Vastey, *Réflexions politiques sur les noirs et les blancs* (Sans Souci, 1817); and *Essai sur les causes de la révolution et des guerres civiles d'Hayti* (Sans Souci, 1819).

Very little of the background of the insurrection is known. The certain facts are these: on the night of August 14, 1791, at a pretended Vodun ceremony in the woods of the Turpin plantation, during a violent storm, several wily and powerful slaves laid plans for a general uprising. Their intentions were communicated, apparently by drum signals, to neighboring plantations. Six days later the attack began, the blacks in that section of the North indiscriminately slaughtering every white man, woman, and child on whom they could lay their hands. From this centre the massacre spread, accompanied by general arson, until practically every plantation in the fertile northern plain was a shambles. The whites who had escaped destruction cowered in the capital city.

The insurrection of 1791 returned measure for measure to the planters for their previous cruelties. Whether one reads accounts written by Haitian patriots or by white apologists, the story is the same: the ferocities on both sides were almost incredible. Blacks gutted children and raped women, whites broke captured Negroes on the wheel, poured boiling oil in their ears, and flayed them alive. The Reign of Terror in France was decorous by comparison. The pent-up hatred of decades was working itself out.

Against half a million riotous blacks the handful of whites had no 175
chance. All who could leave the country fled precipitately. The gens 669
de couleur, on the contrary, although at first alarmed, soon discovered that the revolting slaves were inclined to be friendly to them. They accordingly tried to turn the insurrection to their own purpose, to seize the rule of the colony now being depopulated of whites. France, herself in turmoil, sent over various commissioners whose [648] thankless duty it was to try to restore order; but they were incompetent, often worked at odds with each other, and sometimes engaged in actual treachery. Matters were, if anything, complicated by their ministrations.

In addition, Spain and England, always ready to harass the French, sent troops into Saint-Domingue on the pretext of trying to put [648] down the slave insurrection lest it spread to their neighboring colonies of Santo Domingo and Jamaica. The French general in the colony, Laveaux, would shortly have been defeated if help had not come from two natives, one a well-to-do mulatto, the other a black

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SV3 Haiti SV3

175 669 ex-slave, each of whom aroused his own group to fight off the invading Spaniards and English.

These two men emerging from the maelstrom were the cultured colored general, Rigaud, and the powerful Negro, Toussaint. United in purpose in 1793, they soon began to oppose each other. Their dissent foreshadowed the rift which was permanently to divide free Haiti.

175 159 669 Rigaud, born at Les Cayes in 1761,[14] had been brought up in Bordeaux, France, where he was taught the trade of a goldsmith. Like many other colored colonial youths, he went briefly to Georgia to fight on the side of the Americans in their revolution against England. Gifted with extraordinary military talent, he rose to prominence in Saint-Domingue following the slave insurrection, and played a major part in expelling the British from the colony. He was fiery, intellectual, and brilliant, but lacking in self-control and political subtlety, which put him at a disadvantage with Toussaint. Rigaud's admirers—almost the whole body of free colored people—included all the influential persons in the colony once the whites had been cowed or driven out; the South was devoted to him body and soul, and he had numerous partisans in the provinces of the North and West. But Toussaint was the idol of the half-million blacks.

Born a slave, Toussaint was fortunate in having a kindly master who permitted him the sort of work which gave him leisure for reading. He studied eagerly, devouring all accounts he could find of the military exploits of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. Apparently he took no part in the slave uprising; on the contrary, he helped his master escape to the United States and later regularly provided him with money. Then he himself went to the Spanish part of the island, where he made a military reputation in the Spanish colonial army. When General Laveaux sought his aid against the invaders of harassed Saint-Domingue, the ex-slave accepted his overtures. Detractors of Toussaint call him a "cunning hypocrite" for joining and then deserting the Spaniards, and for accepting high rank under a French general whom he was even then (so it is asserted) planning to supersede. His decision to return to Saint-Domingue was certainly crucial, for it began his meteoric ascent to power. [648]

Accompanied by the black troops he had captained in the Spanish

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[632] [361] [14] Les Cayes, the third largest town in modern Haiti, was even in colonial times an important seaport. It is located on the southwestern peninsula.

colony, he fought engagements with several Spanish detachments 175
on the way back to Saint-Domingue, and soon achieved the return 669
to France of all the territory Spain had recently won from her. 648
Seeing that his ineffectively trained black troops were as yet no match
for the disciplined British, he temporarily withdrew from public 159
sight in order to build his army into a coördinated, smoothly functioning machine. Then he not only defeated the British, but forced their complete withdrawal from the island. He freed General Laveaux, whom they had imprisoned in Cap Français, thereby putting his own commanding officer under personal obligation to him. By 1796 Toussaint was the undisputed hero of his soldiers and, through their praise, of the mass of black ex-slaves; moreover, the French commander trusted and respected him; even the whites of the former régime looked to him with hope, for they had grudgingly to concede that, black though he was, he alone had the power to restore peace and order in the colony.

Only the colored group looked askance at him. They had wel- 175
comed the insurrection of the slaves in 1791 as an invaluable, if 669
bloody, aid in their struggle for equality with the whites; but they were not inclined to be ruled by an ex-slave whose eminence was already a threat to the social order they wished to establish. When, in 1793, the French commissioners had abolished slavery in Saint-Domingue,[15] the action had been as distasteful to the free colored people as it was to the whites; both groups wanted to continue to own slaves; the gens de couleur merely wanted their share also in governing the colony. In their opinion, the struggle was getting out of hand. They gave their allegiance, consequently, not to Toussaint, but to their own man, Rigaud.

The black general now began to show himself as astute a politician as he had been a skilful soldier. He had a romantic streak, which made him assume the prophetic surname Louverture;[16] but beneath the romanticism was a peculiar diplomatic realism. When a newly arrived governor-general tried to stir up dissension between blacks and colored people, on the principle of divide and rule, Toussaint

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[15] In order to pacify the blacks and to win their support against the invading armies of Spain and England.

[16] The name Louverture, now generally written L'Ouverture, is ordinarily conceded to imply Toussaint's conviction that he would provide the opening through which his fellow blacks might achieve freedom. According to another account the name was given him because of his ability to make a breach in the ranks of the enemy; still another explanation refers to his missing front teeth.

175 deftly had him promoted out of colonial office. When another
669 group of commissioners came, he agreed in conference with them
that the remaining whites should be expelled for the sake of peace; as
soon as this was done, however, he effected the nomination of both
the chief commissioner and General Laveaux as representatives of
the colony in the French Assembly, sitting in Paris. Under guise of
175 bestowing honors, he had got rid of every white person who had the
642 slightest claim to rule. By 1797 Toussaint was the supreme leader in
643 Saint-Domingue, his authority disputed only by Rigaud and the
colored group. A civil war was needed to settle the issue between
them, and since his forces were much more numerous than Rigaud's,
Toussaint emerged victor in the brief conflict. Rigaud fled to France,
the power of the mulattoes was broken, and no one was left openly
to contest Toussaint's rule.

"The First of the Blacks," as Toussaint was called, is a bewildering anomaly, and full of contradictions. He had been a slave for fifty years before the insurrection, and was to live only eleven after it. In that short period he became one of the most talked-of men in the world. His Spanish superior officer had said that "God in this terrestrial globe could not commune with a purer spirit"; the Frenchman, Lacroix, remarked, "No one approaches him without fear, and no one leaves him without respect." Even his enemies paid him homage: an English officer, as "a man, a governor, and a general"; a white Frenchman, as "a philosopher, a general, and a good citizen." When he died Wordsworth wrote a moving sonnet to him who had strengthened human faith in "man's unconquerable mind." Yet Toussaint had been a deserter and a schemer, and ruthlessly exploited his power to achieve absolute authority. His own deep conviction of his special mission to lead his people from misery to security has always for his apologists excused the more dubious aspects of his character.

To many Toussaint was a hero with elements of saintliness. In the overheated atmosphere of prejudice and hatred in Saint-Domingue he pursued a calm policy of moderation. Under him, anarchy and massacres came to an end. With an army at his beck and call, he used force only to maintain freedom for his fellow blacks and to defend the colony against foreign invasion. As nominal governor-general after 1799 he revived prosperity, inculcated discipline as an antidote to the intoxication of liberty, respected his contracts, and was a friend of law and order. On the other hand, he had moments

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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of inordinate vanity, and would brook no interference. His henchmen had to endure merciless tongue-lashings. His own people's freedom, about which he was publicly so solicitous, was in many respects little better than slavery.

What he did is more easily told than what he was. Emerging, after a long reign of terror, as a leader in a land which had once been a paradise for whites, he checked among his people the passion and fear which had led to violence. With the restoration of peace, labor began once more on the plantations. The Negroes, though no longer slaves, were ordered back to work, and they docilely obeyed. The return of prosperity between 1799 and 1802 was amazing.

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But the brilliance of Toussaint's rule was first dimmed and then completely extinguished by the rising star of Napoleon in France.[17] Haitian history between 1802 and 1804, although apparently incidental to the story of the contest between blacks and colored people which here concerns us, is nevertheless significant for an understanding of what was to transpire in Haitian social affairs. Napoleon was irritated beyond measure at the effrontery of Toussaint's seizure of power in the colony. The black leader had shown canny statesmanship in winning the friendly coöperation of the president of the United States, John Adams. The supplies and ships that Adams sent enabled Toussaint not only to defeat Rigaud but to achieve independence from France in all but name. With American assistance, Toussaint negotiated an advantageous treaty with England. Probably even more annoying to the First Consul than these political triumphs was Toussaint's audacious success in aping and even anticipating the spacious actions by which Napoleon was trying to make himself majestic in the world's eyes.[18]

It is possible that Napoleon might not have paid so much attention

[643]

[17] It seems strange that this black, a veritable genius whatever his faults, should be so mildly honored in modern Haiti. True, he is regarded with respect, and there are a few statues of him; but the homage of the people is paid rather to his successor, General Dessalines, the antithesis of Toussaint in everything but courage. It was Dessalines, of course, who struck the final blow for Haitian freedom, but even this triumph seems to the foreigner small in comparison with the very real achievements of Toussaint.

[18] For example: Napoleon had given a new constitution to France after his *coup d'état* of the 18 Brumaire; similarly Toussaint, having effected his own coup in Saint-Domingue by deposing the French civil agent, citizen Roume, immediately thereafter gave *his* people a new constitution. In it he not only assumed all political power for life, but also ascribed to himself the right of naming his successor. Bonaparte was unable to take so daring a step for another year. There is ample evidence to show that meanwhile he chafed under the idea of being imitated and anticipated by a "gilded African," as he called Toussaint.

175 to Toussaint if Saint-Domingue had been merely a colony like
648 Martinique, and not the single centre from which measures for
rebuilding the French colonial system could radiate. France was once
669 more taking over Louisiana from Spain; but before Bonaparte could
effectively reach Louisiana to establish his New World empire, he
must make sure of Saint-Domingue. The very real power of Toussaint had to be crushed, and through the whole of 1801 Napoleon was making preparations for the annihilation of the black governor.[19]

175 The plans were as follows: to send his brother-in-law, Leclerc,
648 with a formidable French army to "succeed" Toussaint as governor;
to try to persuade the blacks that the new régime was entirely
721 benevolent to their race, so that no armed resistance would be offered; if persuasion and diplomacy failed, to fight and conquer the Negroes, subduing them once more to slavery; and, above all, to capture Toussaint with all his black counselors and send them as prisoners to France. Napoleon undertook to prepare the way for Leclerc by writing personally to Toussaint: "Assist the Captain-General [Leclerc] with your counsels, your influence, and your talents. What can you desire—the liberty of the blacks? You know that in all the countries where we have been, we have given it to the people who had it not." He repeated this assurance in his message a week later to the French legislature (November 22, 1801): "At Saint-Domingue and at Guadeloupe there are no more slaves. All are free there; all will remain free." Still further, the proclamation he drew up for Leclerc to publish upon his arrival, as a reassurance to the blacks, ran: "If you are told that these forces are destined to ravish your liberty, answer: The Republic has given us liberty, the Republic will not suffer it to be taken from us!"

Leclerc with his army arrived at Cap Français late in January, 1802. He hoped to be received at the capital as a friend, but Christophe, the black general in charge of the city, repulsed his advances. Leclerc was obliged to attack; on February 5 Christophe set fire to the city and withdrew to the neighboring hills. The war of independence had begun.

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[19] The part played by Toussaint for a brief moment in the history of the United States is full of significance. Certain historians are of the opinion that if Napoleon had been successful in the reconquest of Saint-Domingue he would have turned his attention to America rather than to Europe, for he had great colonial schemes. His failure in the colony, according to this theory, made him try to withdraw gracefully from the New World by selling Louisiana to the United States.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

For three months Toussaint's vigorous fighting broke the force of 175
the French attack; one white army was swept away. But Toussaint 648
made two fatal errors of judgment: he relied upon his trained army 726
with its Negro generals, instead of arming his half-million Negroes 728
for guerrilla warfare; and he trusted the pledged word of honor of Leclerc. His army fought bravely enough against the French legions, but the consensus of military experts is that Toussaint's officers, jealous of his domination and feeling that eventually France must win, treacherously gave over their posts and forces to Leclerc. Christophe surrendered on April 26, and Toussaint had no alternative but to put himself in Leclerc's hands.

Napoleon's private orders to Leclerc were positive and precise: 175
"Follow your instructions exactly, and the moment you have rid 648
yourself of Toussaint, Christophe, Dessalines, and the principal brigands, and the masses of the blacks have been disarmed, send over to the continent all the blacks and mulattoes who have played a rôle in the civil troubles. . . . Rid us of these gilded Africans, and we shall have nothing more to wish." Leclerc set himself methodically to carry out these instructions; by April, 1802, he had disarmed the blacks and received Christophe's surrender; the next task was to rid himself of Toussaint. By an apparently innocent invitation to dine and discuss the affairs of the colony, he lured Toussaint into his headquarters on June 10.[10] In the course of the meal Toussaint was seized, bound, and hurried on board a waiting ship. Haiti never saw him again; within a year he died of cold and starvation in a dungeon high in the Jura Mountains of southeastern France.

With Toussaint out of the way, it was now in order to proceed to 175
the second part of Napoleon's plan—the reëstablishment of slavery. 648
Leclerc was to use his own discretion as to the precise moment and 727
manner of announcing this. His instructions from the Minister of 567
Marine, Decrès (June 14, 1802), read in part:

> As regards the return of the blacks to the old régime, the bloody struggle out of which you have just come victorious with glory commands us to use the utmost caution. Perhaps we should only entangle ourselves in it anew if we wished precipitately to break that idol of liberty in whose name so much blood has already flowed. For some time yet vigilance, order, a discipline at once rural and military, must take the place of the positive and pronounced slavery of the colored people of your colony. Especially the

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[10] There is evidence to show that Christophe suggested this stratagem to Leclerc.

175 master's good usage must re-attach them to his rule. When they shall have
648 felt by comparison the difference between a usurping and tyrannical yoke
727 [apparently he means such a yoke as Toussaint's] and that of the legitimate
561 proprietor interested in their preservation, then the moment will have
arrived for making them return to their original condition, from which it was so disastrous to draw them.

175 The plan to reëstablish slavery, however, was never carried out,
648 nor was its scheduled sequel, the occupation of Louisiana. The French
soldiers in Saint-Domingue began to succumb to an invisible assailant
727 —yellow fever. The first French army of 17,000 men had been largely consumed in the task of conquering Toussaint's armies; the second was now being swept away by disease. Leclerc's letters to Napoleon pleading for reinforcements soon became frantic in their despair. Fever was weakening the army at the very moment when rumors of impending reënslavement were strengthening the number of active antagonists to the French. The black generals who had deserted Toussaint for Leclerc now swung back again to the opposition. Then Leclerc himself fell ill of the fever. Apparently all-conquering in June, 1802, by November he was dead.

175 This was the turning point in Napoleon's whole American policy.
727 The war had ruined Saint-Domingue economically; it had destroyed
plantations, paralyzed labor, and reduced the population to bar-
721 barism. To resume the conquest would have cost France heavily; the
648 army dreaded service in a region where death was almost certain; the financial expense had been frightful: one year of war had consumed 50,000 men and several million dollars, yet at least as many men and as much money would still be needed before any return could be expected. Consequently, Napoleon decided to withdraw from his whole American experiment, saving face as far as possible. He appointed the brave but incompetent Rochambeau to succeed Leclerc, promised him reënforcements—and then broke the Peace of Amiens, so that France became embroiled in a European war. Affairs in Saint-Domingue (including the troops promised to Rochambeau) were conveniently forgotten after March, 1803; and the whole Louisiana territory was sold to the United States.

175 The end of French control in Saint-Domingue came shortly.
648 Rochambeau, as well as he could, waged desultory warfare, hanging, shooting, drowning, burning all the Negroes he could catch; hunting them with fifteen hundred bloodhounds bought in Jamaica for more

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SV3 Haiti SV3

than a hundred dollars each; wasting money, squandering men. On 175
the other side, Dessalines and Christophe massacred every white 648
within their reach. Rochambeau held on until November, 1803, when he surrendered with his few remaining men to the English in Jamaica.

On January 1, 1804, Dessalines proclaimed the independence of 175
Haiti, choosing this aboriginal Indian name (meaning "mountain- 642
ous") rather than the French Saint-Domingue. What the colored 648
people had begun with their petitions to the French Assembly in 1789 had now worked itself out, but along lines entirely different from their hopes or plans. The whites were gone, but the blacks were in control. Now a struggle for precedence was to begin between the ruling blacks and the still aspiring people of color.[21]

[21] The historical details rehearsed in this chapter are summarized from the many documented monographs and histories of the period cited in the Bibliography at the end of this volume. It seems unnecessary to quote such ority for each historical statement made in this sketch of background material. [114]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

[p. 32]

III

THE FORMATIVE YEARS, 1804–1843

1. *Dessalines (1804–1806)*

175 643 159 IF ever a country had an opportunity to start absolutely fresh in choosing its own social institutions, Haiti had that opportunity in 1804. Free at last, with no traditions to uphold, the first independent Negro state in the world, owing allegiance to no man or nation, the Haitians might (theoretically, at least) have invented an entirely new little world of economic, political, religious, and social life. All paths were open to them. Dessalines,[1] as head of state, had only to lead them. His mental limitations, however, were such that he could only follow where the hated French had led, and soon set the Haitians upon the road to a caste system.

175 642 643 The first part of the story of independent Haiti is to a certain extent the story of the alternative lines of action laid down by four great men, the black Dessalines and his equally black successor Christophe, the mulatto Pétion and his worshipful mulatto disciple Boyer.

On New Year's Day, 1804, Dessalines made a stirring proclamation of independence. In it were many references to *liberté* but none whatever to *égalité* or *fraternité*. The two years of his rule show clearly that he had no use for such abstractions as equality or fraternity, while liberty to him was synonymous only with freedom from French dominance. He was a tyrant whose very tyranny unwittingly prepared the way for eventual control by the colored group over the blacks.

Accompanying the proclamation of Dessalines was another signed by his generals, naming him governor-general for life, swearing "to obey blindly all laws emanating from his authority," giving him the right to make peace or war, and permitting him to name his successor. Absolutism was the order of the day. In the same paragraph in which he condemned French despotism, Dessalines said to his

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[1] Jean-Jacques Dessalines had been born a slave on a plantation near Grande-Rivière du Nord in the seventeen-fifties or -sixties. Unlike Toussaint, whose leading general he was, Dessalines was illiterate. The outstanding characteristic of his temperament was his violent passion.

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SV3 Haiti SV3

people: "If ever you refuse, or grumblingly accept, the laws which 175
the genius guarding your destinies dictates to me for your happiness, 642
you will merit the fate of ungrateful people. But perish that hideous
idea!" There can be little doubt that he wished Haiti under his 645
direction to become prosperous; but it is likewise clear that he was
personally self-centred and inordinately grasping.

Each step Dessalines took to further his ambitions either for Haitian prosperity or for his own fortunes had its bearing upon the development of social classes in the country. Extermination of all remaining whites was one of the first tasks he set himself. On a promise of clemency he lured several hundred gullible French out of hiding, and butchered them in cold blood. His campaign of extirpation was methodical and thorough. To try to penetrate into the psychological background of this violence is to desert fact for speculation: it may have been a desire for revenge on the French, pure and simple; it may have been gloating sadism; he may have wished to warn France against any future attempts to regain possession of the country; or he may have wanted to notify his subjects of his intention to rule with severe discipline. Certainly this last aim was achieved, if any of his people did not already know, after two years of warfare, the extent of his ruthlessness. He ruled by fear and by threats, never by the cultivation of loyalties.

Apparently he was afraid that Napoleon would renew his efforts 175
to subdue the former colony. To forestall such an attempt he ordered 643
each of his governing subalterns to construct one great fort on the 466
most prominent hill in their district—a scheme which led imme- 712
diately to the institution of forced labor. He likewise devised a plan, 361
not actually put into effect, for destroying all towns and plantations
near the coast and moving the capital to an inland village; and so
isolating Haitians from all contact with the outside world.

Turning to domestic policy, he faced a herculean task. The warfare 175
of 1802–3 had left the country in chaos. Plantations and agricultural 643
projects were almost totally ruined. All habits of steady industry had 433
been lost. Dread of a possible new attack by the French made neces- 701
sary a great army, and this in turn removed most able-bodied men 464
from productive labor in the fields, while the construction of for- 712
tresses still further depleted the labor supply. The first census of free
Haiti, in 1805 (probably not highly accurate), showed only 380,000 175
people, with the women outnumbering men by almost three to 162

two.

two. Here was a decline of about 150,000 from 1790.[2] It is a com-
175 mentary on the man's forcefulness that in spite of all difficulties
162 [566] Dessalines established an effective economic organization. Its basis
was serfdom.

175 Every citizen, he announced, must consider himself in one of two
463 categories, laborer or soldier. There were to be no shirkers in the
new Haiti; if a man was not in the army, he must do manual labor.
642 Artisans who followed a craft counted as laborers. Women, since
656 they could not join the army, must work shoulder to shoulder with
[562] their men. It was understood that direction of Haiti's new order
would be carried on by state officials who were neither laborers nor
soldiers, but these officials were to be so few that they would not
constitute a separate third category.

175 This step of Dessalines' was a radical one. It proclaimed the mastery
642 of state over individual; and even more significantly it divided the
people according to economic task, rather than birth, wealth, color,
525 or social status. At first the more ambitious citizens bore patiently
with the arbitrary decree, thinking they might be able to achieve
comfortable status under a lenient definition of "soldier" or else by
sinecure tasks as officials. Their disillusionment was swift. Even
swifter was the chagrin of the lowly folk who had been slaves, for
they found themselves now in actual bondage to one of their own
color.

175 All people except soldiers, ran the decree, must be "attached as
526 cultivators to a plantation." This might be translated to read "bound
to the soil." The vast majority of the people were forced willy-nilly
466 into agriculture. It was "formally prohibited for a cultivator to
desert the plantation to which he was assigned"; conversely, it was a
crime to give asylum to a runaway cultivator, male or female.[3] If
such conditions differed from slavery, they were at least close to
[433] what the mediaeval world knew as serfdom. But under this régime
of forced labor the recently ravaged fields once more became productive: cotton plantations again covered the plain of the Artibonite, and sugar refineries were slowly rebuilt all over the country.

To forestall complaint from the people once again driven into

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[2] See, for an analysis of population figures, Placide Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique de l'île d'Hayti, Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1826), pp. 502–503.

[3] A certain Mlle. Chapotin, of respectable family, was accused of having harbored a fugitive female cultivator, and, since she was unable to pay immediately the fine imposed upon her by the police at Port-au-Prince, she was condemned to serve a jail term.

field labor, the ruler emphasized the clemency of his new régime. 175
Labor the people must, but not under the whip; that arch symbol of 566
slavery was abolished forever. The working day was shortened by a 466
third. It was provided that, if just reason were shown, a man might even secure permission from his district commissioner to move from the plantation to which he was attached.

These were words. Facts were another matter. The overseers had been ordered to exact so much labor from their underlings, yet without whips; knowing no persuading power other than chastisement, they backed up their commands with blows of *lianes*, thick pliable vines which could be gathered anywhere in the island. Thus the laggard was driven, the law kept to the letter, and the overseer praised by his superiors. As for the working day, crops must be tended at the proper moment, so that the boasted shortening of hours generally came to little. Finally, the right to secure permission to move away from a plantation was effectively limited by the refusal of commissioners to grant any such request.

Every public expression of Dessalines showed a solicitude for the welfare of the workers, while his every act indicated that he regarded them as impersonal parts of the machine of state. He knew by his own former experience as a slave what a day's stint should be and the ruses used by laborers to avoid steady work; he was therefore able to order agricultural labor on a realistic basis.

The economic organization created by Dessalines provided the 175
roots for the peasantry which was soon to develop as a characteristic 178
form of Haitian life. Among these fundamental conditions were the 463
existence of agriculture as a prevalent occupation, the immobility of 24
all workers on the land, and a thorough schooling of the people in 433
patient acceptance. Dessalines might theoretically have established 566
some other economic system—a division of estates into small properties, for example, with each farmer a master of his own destiny; a democratic coöperative economy; slavery again; feudalism with a landed gentry. At critical times, one leader's choice may affect the whole future life of the country. The decision of Dessalines to 175
keep the bulk of his people in servitude, without using the termi- 566
nology of slavery, gave the new freemen no opportunity to become acquainted with work other than tillage. They were sent back to the only tasks they had ever known, their horizons were just as limited as before, their personal freedom just as restricted. The worst punishments of slavery, together with torture and gross overwork,

175 were abolished; with such concessions the people must be satisfied.
566 Dessalines tacitly confessed his inability to follow any course but the
French colonial system, with modifications introduced by Toussaint.

167 Many of the blacks, having tasted a moment's freedom, were not
175 inclined to give it up. Before the new order of Dessalines was firmly
established, therefore, they ran away with their families into the hills,
where they escaped official notice. As squatters they lived out their
lives unmolested. By the time they were officially rediscovered, all
Haiti had become a land of peasants.

175 At the other end of the ladder from the laborers were the officials,
463 who might be great men or small clerks, members of the entourage
555 of the governor-general or merely overseers of a plantation. In order
to keep the vast agricultural economy functioning smoothly it was
647 necessary to have hundreds of agents, directors, clerks, and overseers,
565 each of whom must report to a superior. In this official class there
was at least a possibility of realizing an ambition for oneself; there
was a basis of comparison; more important, there was some possibility
of attracting favorable attention of persons in high places and
so of gaining promotion. Inevitably something of the colonial state
of mind must have carried over into the new era, so that an ex-slave
would consider himself as having risen in the world to be now
performing a task which only white men used to do—to be spared
field labor and to direct the work of others. Out of this group of
petty agents rose a few men of ambition who were later to belong
to the élite.

175 Higher officers of state were in a much more favorable position to
565 achieve social eminence. Not only did they perform no manual
647 labor; they were twice removed from that life, since they directed
the men who directed the workers. They handled funds. They came
[212] into contact with Dessalines himself. Many former gens de couleur
filled these important posts, for the number of Haitians who could
read and write was woefully limited.

175 The army was the great power in the country, for the new state
701 was a military one. Since fear of a return of the French required the
maintenance of a large standing army,[4] Dessalines made a virtue of
this apparent necessity, using his soldiers to enforce discipline among
the cultivators. On whom else could he rely for his local administration

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[4] Humboldt estimated that the army of Dessalines numbered 37,300, which would be one tenth of the total population. Other estimates run as low as 15,000. Even this figure would be about a tenth of the male population.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

tion? Here again, the decision of a leader fixed the direction of 175
Haitian life for decades to come. It is agreed by commentators that 701
overmilitarization was the bane of nineteenth-century Haiti. One [162]
tenth of all able-bodied men were constantly in active army service.
Moreover, all the male cultivators on plantations must hold themselves in readiness to obey the government's call to arms; ammunition and arms were stored in every parish. A military mentality was [181]
nourished, the people early learning the lesson (apparently unchallenged by any liberal) that the army should rule and the people obey.

Although the common soldiers were ex-slaves who, upon dismissal from service, would return to the ranks of agricultural workers, their officers had a higher status. Noncommissioned officers had a long road to travel to eminence, but like the overseers they had at least a glimpse of the promised land of distinction. Captains and generals had this vision within their grasp: they were already of the élite.

In the subcategory of "artisans" were included all the townspeople 175
who carried on crafts or trades. It must be remembered that Haiti 463
had no cities, and that its two largest towns then numbered probably
no more than 10,000 people each, so that artisans were not numerous. 361
Since there was a distinction in the arduousness of various pursuits as well as in their financial return there existed in this category, as in the official and military, some chance for social prestige.

The only persons remaining outside the categories mentioned were 175
colored landowners who had held estates in the colonial period. 471
Dessalines took active steps to gain control of most of the land in the 423
country, but at his death in 1806 there were still many of the old
proprietors left who were, in the main, determined to hold their 425
land and preserve their dignity as non-laborers.

Assassination by his political foes ended the career of Dessalines 175
only two years after he assumed power. In 1805 he had had himself
crowned emperor in imitation of Napoleon, but unlike Napoleon he 643
permitted no nobility. "*Moi seul, je suis noble!*" he replied to ambitious henchmen who asked for the establishment of a peerage. It was the Emperor's tactless handling of the social situation which caused his murder, for he touched sensitive nerves on the raw in attacking property rights, inherited privilege, color distinctions, and social aspirations. The cultivators grumblingly accepted his decrees; the ambitious upper group did not.

The former affranchis fully intended to keep their lands once the 6-9

The former affranchis fully intended to keep

their lands once the
175 French were driven out. They could not but be alarmed as they saw
423 the steady direction of Dessalines' moves toward a complete mo-
nopoly of land ownership by the state. On the very day following
425 independence, a decree proclaimed that all lands owned by France
471 in colonial days now belonged to Haiti. Next (February 7, 1804)
Dessalines canceled all sales and donations made to mulattoes and ex-slaves by fleeing French who, in a last despairing effort to salvage something from the wreckage of olden days, had "entrusted" their lands to non-whites. By these two strokes all lands owned by white men before 1803 became state property,[5] but only the second clipped the wings of socially ambitious colored people.

175 Serious uneasiness was caused by the next measure, an order for a
421 general verification of property titles. This would have been a deli-
cate task at best, considering the disorder of the past thirteen years.
[693] It was made more complicated to carry out by the serious lack of
men trained in law. A few like Balthasar Inginac, later an important adviser and trusted friend of two presidents, were scrupulously conscientious, but by the same token highly unpopular with those whom they deprived of newly (and shadily) acquired "estates." The majority of officials, according to report, listened to the pleading of many who had managed by hook or crook to secure a tenuous claim to vacant properties, validating their fraudulent titles for them. It has been claimed, without rebuttal, that most of these officials were not above taking bribes. When complaint was made to Dessalines of such actions he took steps to make his appointees do their duty, but each confiscation made new enemies for Dessalines.

Some of the mulattoes, citing their French paternity, claimed land formerly owned by their French fathers, even though these parents had never regarded their sons as more than bastards. Dessalines once broke out in furious answer to such a claimant: "*Et les pauvres*
175 *nègres dont les pères sont en Afrique, ils n'auront donc rien!*"

425 The state took over thousands of acres. Those Haitians, colored or
536 black, who aspired to landownership as the foundation of position,

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[642] [5] The hatred of the Haitians for the French, and because of them, for white people
[643] in general, was seen not only in these confiscations but in commitments for the future. A proclamation of April 28, 1804, suppressed to "all foreigners" the right to own property in land. The first Haitian constitution, May 20, 1805, took an even more drastic step in saying that "no white man shall henceforth set foot in this country as a landowner," and that "*all* property formerly belonging to a white Frenchman" was now confiscate to the profit of the state.

175 425 556 prestige, and the normal fulfillment of dignity, were thus frustrated in their efforts. They began to see that the Emperor intended to withhold from them freedom, room for the exercise of ability or power, fullness of life in whatever form. Not only was there little opportunity for achieving prestige; the repressive and contemptuous attitude of Dessalines denied them even ordinary negative respect, without which dignity of life is impossible.

175 423 425 By confiscation of vacant and falsely claimed estates, Dessalines created a vast public domain. He did not hesitate to secure other lands which he considered valuable, resorting to arbitrary and often cruel means—even, it is said, to forgery and murder—to dispossess those who stood firm in their claims. This attack on private property added other dissidents to his enemies—men who felt themselves clearly in the right legally and morally, men who with clear consciences joined the movement to put down a tyrant. The land thus acquired was leased in parcels at an annual rent to the highest bidders.[6] [427]

175 643 421 472 661 563 The Emperor was blind to the normal human needs of the better elements of the population. He deprived them of property in land, the only basis they knew for wealth and independence; he forbade enterprises undertaken by individual initiative; he continually wounded delicate sensibilities. The Emperor was not a man to spare people's feelings, and he dared use the frank but dangerous words Negro and mulatto. He once shouted to a group of pleaders for position: "*Prenez garde à vous, nègres et mulâtres! Nous avons tous combattu contre les blancs; les biens que nous avons conquis en versant notre sang, appartiennent à nous tous; j'entends qu'ils soient partagés avec équité!*" It was not only Dessalines' idea of "equity" which aroused the *anciens libres* but his use of the descriptive nouns they hated.

175 643 563 661 The colored people were well aware of the hostility of Dessalines to their group. He was inferior to them in learning, and knew it. He was certainly, by the world's judgment, inferior to them in birth. His very deficiencies by comparison with his colored subjects made him hate them more: for example, he was passionately fond of dancing, preferring compliments on his grace to praise of his statesmanship; yet his awkwardness on the ballroom floor even

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[175] [425] [423] 6. Although there are no records extant to show the exact amount of land which Dessalines succeeded in bringing into state ownership, it is estimated that more than two thirds of all the productive plantations in Haiti in 1806 were in the hands of the government. Other estimates range as high as ninety per cent.

175 beside other ex-slaves was too evident to avert ridicule, which
643 Dessalines quickly noted. Few opportunities escaped the Emperor,
563 therefore, of making the light-skinned Haitians quake in their boots.
661 He wrote to Pétion (August 24, 1804), leader of the colored people,
that in his slaughter of white Frenchmen he had often been "unable" to distinguish between whites and light-colored Haitians. Pétion and his friends knew that Dessalines did not regret his inability to make the distinction.[7]

175 Possibly Dessalines was clear-sighted enough to realize that the old
distinctions of color, if allowed to continue in the new state as in-
563 dicative of social prestige, might cause endless strife within the
643 nation. Possibly, on the other hand, he wished to make the lighter-skinned Haitians realize that he, a Negro, was more than their equal. Whatever his underlying motives, he was impatient with the struggle for prestige. The steps he took to eradicate distinctions based upon color were characterized by his usual blunt tactlessness. In 1805 he informed Pétion, the outstanding mulatto general, that a union of black and colored people was essential to the happiness of the Empire; he said he wanted the Haitian people to become *bronzed* by this union, so that there would be no longer any important difference of skin color. All this was preface to a proposal that Pétion, as the ablest of the mulattoes, should marry the Emperor's black daughter, Célimène. Pétion, refined, highly educated, and gently cynical, was considerably perturbed and frankly embarrassed by the suddenness of this radical suggestion. His reply, that he was not inclined to marry at all, offended Dessalines and made him suspect a slight, but he dismissed Pétion with the pointed suggestion that he "think the matter over." Pétion knew, as the Emperor did not, that one of his aides-de-camp, Chancy, was not only in love with Célimène but had already got her with child. It is entirely possible, too, that he was aware of the growing underground opposition to Dessalines and that, as the Emperor's star was beginning to decline, he did not wish

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[721] [7] It must be said to the credit of the black masses that they did not relish the systematic slaughter of the whites which so pleased Dessalines. Negro cultivators frequently collected potential victims, hiding them and aiding their escape from the country. The repugnance of the masses for such massacre was so evident that their generals had at times to drive them at bayonet's point. "The blacks of the plain behaved very well," said an exile in a letter (June 1, 1804) written from Jamaica to Moreau de Saint-Méry. Madiou says that after the massacre of the whites some Haitian blacks abandoned their country and went to join former masters in a foreign land.

to ally himself with the ruling family. When Dessalines shortly 175
discovered his daughter's condition, he burst into maledictions 563
against all mulattoes, saying that they had plotted this disgrace to 643
him and to his family. He went so far as to speak of having them all executed.

The Emperor's determination, and all his measures, could not quench the social ambition of his leading subjects. They bore what must be borne, conspiring meanwhile to get rid of him. They still had the advantage over the masses of a superior education, and they knew the path to eminence, once the obstacle of the Emperor was removed.

Nothing was done during the reign of Dessalines to cultivate the 175
minds of the laboring class. Discipline backed by force was the
guiding principle in dealing with them. Instead of trying to educate 643
his people to understand their duties and to take an active part in 661
statecraft, Dessalines—his generals and counselors, mulatto and black 641
alike, thoroughly approving—used only compulsion. There was [871]
actually little difference between the attitude of this ruling clique toward the mass of laborers and that of their former white owners. Both looked upon them as cattle. A few of his advisers tried to persuade the Emperor to provide moral and religious education for the people so that they would not be seduced into completely evil ways, but the Emperor replied, "You are wrong; the laborers can be controlled only by fear of punishment and even death; I shall lead them only by these means; my 'morale' shall be the bayonet."

In short, between 1804 and 1806 no prominent figure in Haitian 175
life seems even to have dreamed of "liberal" institutions. Those who 565
had education, knowledge, and culture preserved them carefully for 641
themselves. The wisdom, even the possibility, of enlightening the masses was doubted. Most Haitians remained in complete ignorance of what went on in the outside world.

Dessalines was killed by ambush near Port-au-Prince on Octo- 175
ber 17, 1806. The mulattoes were generally supposed to have planned 643
the assassination, for it was well known that they had no cause to be 661
fond of him. His callousness had raised up enemies in all walks of life. The cultivators were glad he was gone, because of his harshness. They were virtually slaves again in all but name; it was reported that upon his personal estates he had made unsatisfactory workers run the gauntlet between lines of soldiers armed with thorny switches, and

175 643 661 such an example of rigor might spread. The moral element of the population had long looked askance at his libertinage; his first act upon entering a town during a visit of state was regularly to have his aides select for him the most attractive females in the vicinity, with whom he would spend more time than at the business of governing. [103] Not even his army was sorrowful over his death. He had let his loyal troops go for months without pay, and then, reviewing a group of them one day, taunted and railed at them for their ragged uniforms. "You look as naked as a bunch of old bottles!" he cried.

Dessalines had restored order to his country and had founded a state. Both achievements rested upon a display of force which inspired cringing fear and denied normal human aspirations. His entire social and economic order was based upon the subservience of the many to the few.

2. *Christophe (1807–1820)*

175 178 Until 1807 all Haitians had the same political background—the French colonial régime, revolution, the governorship of Toussaint, and the stern rule of Dessalines. Now the common path forked. Two avenues were opened up during the next dozen years, one by Christophe, the other by his Southern and mulatto rival, Pétion. The former was the road of discipline, hard work, and feudal control; the latter was one of persuasion, *laissez faire*, and small properties. Haiti ultimately chose the second.

175 643 642 662 The logical successor to Dessalines was his powerful Negro henchman, Christophe.[8] This black general felt so certain of his leadership that he did not even bother to attend the *Assemblée Constituante* which was to choose the new head of state. The mulattoes, however, had agreed among themselves that they had had enough of rule by ignorant ex-slaves. They consequently performed the very skillful manoeuvre of preparing a constitution which should effectively shear a new president of dictatorial power; this done, they dutifully elected Christophe to the presidential office. The wrathful general peremptorily declined to rule by virtue of so anaemic a document, and led his army southward to demand proper respect for his august

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[8] The name Christophe was taken from the English Caribbean island of St. Christopher, on which this black slave was born. Later in life he took as his first name Henry, spelling it in the English fashion rather than the French, as an indication of his wholehearted admiration of English people and English ways.

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SV3 Haiti SV3

person. To his evident surprise he was met not by meek submission, but by the army of the mulatto Pétion. Christophe was not defeated; neither was he victorious. He was obliged to retire in high dudgeon to his loyal supporters in the North, where he proceeded to set up a state according to his own idea of what a state should be. 175 643 642 662

The Assembly thereupon outlawed Christophe on the ground of rebellion against constituted authority, electing in his stead their great favorite Pétion, whose power as president of the Republic was to be limited by the new constitution. For the next thirteen years, from 1807 to 1820, the tiny country with its 10,000 square miles was divided, Christophe ruling in the North and in the fertile valley of the Artibonite, and Pétion governing until his death in 1818 in the West and South, the main strongholds of the colored element.

Christophe was of the stuff that myths are made of. He was indisputably Haiti's most dynamic, relentlessly effective, and dramatic ruler of the nineteenth century. Like Toussaint and Dessalines, he was a black ex-slave, and like them he had won his spurs as a military leader during the revolution. He was an ardent patriot whose love for his country did not lead to retrogressive chauvinism. Whereas Dessalines through fear and hatred of the French had excluded all white men from Haiti, Christophe had the perspicacity to see that the country could benefit from the contribution of whites. Englishmen he especially welcomed. Like his predecessors Christophe drove his people—with a tyrant's lash, many thought—but only to increase the glory of Haiti. 175 643 663

Christophe had a vaulting imagination which brought glamour even to practical expedients. He built a colossal fortress on a high mountain in the North, partly for defense, but partly to make his contemned Negro people feel that they could achieve one of the architectural and engineering marvels of the age. His exquisite palace, Sans Souci, not only satisfied his own vanity as a ruler but also provided a focal point for the imagination and loyalty of his subjects. In 1811 he had himself crowned king, Henry I, amidst pomp and circumstance—and then created a royal court, partly to reward his leaders, partly to get the fees for patents of nobility, but primarily to bind all important men in the country to himself and to the Haitian state with unbreakable personal bonds. Dramatic in almost every particular of his life and reign, he ruled for thirteen years more through force of personality than by tyranny. Taxes were heavy [712] [644]

Taxes were heavy

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651 and work strenuous; but there were a sound currency, commercial
652 and agricultural prosperity, and a full treasury.

Like many a great man he was an overweening egotist. His
175 energy and ambition, for Haiti as well as for himself, neither understood
643 nor tolerated a lesser determination than his own. At times he
159 seemed more intent upon the letter than upon the spirit of his laws.
Probably his chief defect, a common failing of strong men, was a disregard for humble individual worth. To write of him invites the most colorful vocabulary. He is Black Majesty and the Emperor Jones. By almost any standards of leadership he would be accounted a great man. He lacked only those few final, subtle qualities which make for sheer genius. In 1820, stricken by paralysis and faced with defections in his army, he died as he had lived, dramatically, ending his life with a specially saved bullet (folklore says a silver one), in his palace of the ironic name, Sans Souci.

175 In no significant respect did Christophe change the feudal structure
643 of economic organization begun by Toussaint and carried on by
Dessalines. It was in administration, especially as it affected social
status, that the thirteen years of Christophe were important for the
[641] future of Haiti. Where the Emperor had been an unpredictable
tyrant whose heavy hand inspired only terror, Christophe was a sternly just father whose well-disciplined children respected, admired, and even loved him.

175 The land policy of the two régimes was similar. Government
estates were farmed out on five-year leases to the highest bidders
427 among the well-to-do; large plantations belonging to the state were
415 tilled by cultivators who might, without taking the term too harshly,
655 be called serfs; loyal supporters and wealthy individuals were entrusted
566 with responsibility. Like Dessalines, Christophe added wealth
643 to power and rendered all his subjects dependent upon himself
rather than on their own resources and influence—but all this with a difference.

175 Where the Emperor had denied the natural vanity of his aides by
643 refusing them nobility, Christophe accepted their ambition as perfectly
normal and made use of it for his own purposes. Four years
642 after he had established his state, he changed it from a republic to a
565 kingdom; all his important men he made dukes, barons, counts,
knights. He warned them that he would expect them to live up to the dignities conferred upon them. Pomp and regalia are costly;

therefore plantations must be made to yield the uttermost farthing 175 643
if the nobleman was to pay for the necessities of strict court etiquette. 642
It was by no means a childish whim which prompted Christophe to 565
call himself a king; rather an intelligent utilization of the human
material the leader had to work with. Vanity was to serve an economic
and a political purpose.

Christophe perceived that the defect of Dessalines' reign had been 175
lack of security, both of person and property. Agriculture is a long- 651
term investment and so must be hedged about by orderly rules. To
this end the monarch stated his laws clearly, charged a fixed tax—
one fourth of the annual crop—which would enrich the kingdom
while allowing the tenant-proprietor a reasonable profit, and then
guaranteed that no arbitrary demands would be made. Certainly
there was no pampering of the wealthy, but there was ample
prosperity resulting from regularity and security.

The ordinary citizen was, as he had been, bound to the soil as an 175
agricultural laborer. This quasi-serfdom, however, was comparative 566
freedom. It simply meant that the home and work of a man must be 641
at the plantation on which he had been born. Saturday afternoons 466
and Sundays were free, so that the laborers might make the most of
their opportunities to visit the nearest market village, to buy and
sell small goods, gossip, and enjoy the sociability of being part of a
crowd. Being bound to the soil meant simply that they could not
move, when the impulse seized them, to another plantation or
another part of the country. Those whose mothers or relatives were
natives of a plantation must return to that estate, being forbidden to
live in towns. No person, military or other, who did not derive his [582]
living from a plantation, could marry an agricultural worker—a
prohibition designed to prevent workers from leaving estates because
of family ties, and particularly to prevent women, as mothers of
future cultivators, from deserting agriculture.

Mediaeval serfdom itself went no further in binding people to the 175
soil. Indeed, it did not go so far in regulating the daily life of serfs. 566
Under Christophe the cultivators lived according to a routine as 512
strict as that of a school. Reveille was rung as early as three o'clock 466
to arouse women to prepare breakfasts for their menfolk; by four
or four-thirty the bell was sounded for the commencement of work,
which began after prayers had been led by the overseer. At nine
o'clock there was a pause for luncheon, and then a resumption of

175 work until noon. A two-hour siesta followed, but from two until
566 sunset there was steady work. Only after evening prayers was the
512 worker free. During the day no cultivator might leave his task except
466 for direst need. The lame and the halt were not required to till the
fields, but must carry around buckets of drinking water, take care of
the children, and do odd jobs about the estate.

175 Christophe made a steady and, in the main, successful effort to
566 explain to the people the necessity of hard work on the plantation.
466 As with the noblemen, the serfs knew precisely what was expected of
them, and why. Their regimentation was strict, but understandable. It was clearly stipulated that if a worker shirked his job he was to be put in prison and made to do forced labor there. Laziness in the fields was to be punished by strokes from the overseer's liane. Hard and steady work was demanded during the whole thirteen years of Christophe's rule, but only rarely was there complaint, as there had been constantly under Dessalines, of cruelty on the part of overseers.

175 The quarter part of the total crop of any plantation was to go to
465 the workers as wages, and, since production increased and prices
rose, this quarter which they were free to spend as they pleased provided a powerful incentive to further industry. As compared with anything they had known before, the workers were now recipients of an ample income. On the plantations they cultivated
[423] the money crops of sugar and coffee. In addition, each family had
[241] its own garden plot on which to raise the food crops—yams, plantains, beans, and bananas—for personal use.[9]

175 Christophe was so far ahead of his time that he tried to introduce
177 British methods of agriculture into his kingdom. The results were
407 insignificant. The plough, although obviously superior in efficiency
178 to the hoe, eliminated the sociable companionship of working in
unison, and demanded horses and mules which the country lacked. The innovations were *consequently too radical to be accepted. In the* main, the agricultural methods of the kingdom continued to be those familiar in slave days.

175 Thirteen years of careful direction can fix many patterns of social
178 routine. One of Christophe's rules was that no cultivator attached to

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√[241] [9] The staples of other countries, such as Irish potatoes, wheat, barley, and oats, did not flourish in Haiti. On the large plantations, indigo and cotton, which had been money crops in the French régime, were generally neglected, as they had been in the time of Dessalines.

One of Christophe's rules was that no cultivator attached to

a plantation—and every ordinary country person was so attached 175
—might leave the estate without permission from a military officer.[10] 566
Two of the common folkways of Haitian peasant life since his time 178
have been immobility and general acceptance of orders from the [484]
military. Both characteristics had been fostered by slavery and by
the régimes of Toussaint and Dessalines, and these folkways became
fixed under Christophe.

Other rules introduced by the King, however, lapsed shortly after 175
his strong hand was removed. For example, the monarch required of 178
the whole population that whenever they visited the capital on feast 291
days or went to the market towns on Saturdays they be decently clad 527
in clean clothes.[11] Since the time of Christophe, neatness of appear- 183
ance has hardly been a folk characteristic, probably because of
poverty rather than lack of desire to dress well. Nor did scrupulous [446]
regularity of work in the fields continue as a folkway later, when the
great plantations were broken up.

Like a father the King tried to inculcate moral standards of honesty 175
in his people. To prevent theft he had small valuables, such as watches 577
or jewelry or purses, "planted," and if the finder did not immediately 177
turn them over to the nearest Dahomet, punishment was meted out.
Such a policy made honesty contagious. Thefts and depredation were soon almost unknown. The most tempting store of wealth could be left safely unlocked or in the open air. Christophe's achievement in this matter is eloquent testimony to his success as a paternal leader, for it is no small task to initiate moral ideas among people who for a generation have lacked them. Even today it is the proud boast of the Haitians that their people are honest.

As compared with the liberties of farmers in the United States of 175
the same period, the Haitian agricultural workers' freedom was 566
infinitesimally small, but by contrast with the bondage of slavery,
their new status was definitely higher.

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[10] Christophe called his royal police force "Dahomets," after the West African [625]
kingdom, Dahomey, from which most of the men had come. They were not ordinary soldiers but especially imported and carefully selected men whose intelligence made them stand out from their fellows. Each Dahomet was given a course of training in his task as administrator before being sent out. The general consensus of foreign visitors was that these Dahomets were efficient even in small matters.

[11] This rule was partly an indication of Christophe's vanity, personal and national, [577]
for he was deeply desirous of the good opinion of white visitors, especially those from [186]
England. He wanted Europeans to respect Haiti as they would respect any small state, and not to praise it merely as an example of "Negro progress."

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175 their new status was definitely higher. Mild serfdom might be
thought of as the first intermediate step toward freedom. Democracy
565 was still far off, there being no real middle class upon which to build
566 it. Only the artisans of the towns and the ex-soldiers or the cultivators
who had managed to lease small estates could be considered
middle class. Christophe forced every dweller in villages or towns to
have a manual skill. The only alternative was field work on a
plantation.

The "aristocrats" of the kingdom were prevailingly black rather
than colored. It was not to be expected that a vain man would soon
forget the trick by which the mulattoes had frustrated him in his
175 expectation of becoming the ruler of all Haiti. To say that the intermittent
civil war between Christophe's kingdom of the North and
669 Pétion's republic of the South was a struggle between blacks and
643 colored people would not do great violence to the essential truth.
563 Christophe's suspicion of *gens de couleur* was so well known that
few were surprised at the high death rate of mulatto generals in the
North. The murder of General Clervaux was definitely laid at
Christophe's door.

The fact remains that among the nobility were men of all degrees
of color. The King liked to say that he neither accepted nor yet took
exception to the color of a man's epidermis—that in this matter he
was *vert* (green), which is to say, neutral and indifferent. When he
was angry his wrath fell indiscriminately upon the offender of
whatever complexion. Similarly, when he found a light-skinned
man who faithfully supervised a leased estate, thus proving his
175 loyalty, the man was rewarded and promoted. Nevertheless, an
643 underlying prejudice remained in his breast, bursting out occasionally
at crises, and having ultimately a serious effect upon the loyalty of
721 many of his people. When some of his subjects, enticed by the easygoing
563 régime of the South, ran away to Pétion's republic, Christophe
was angry enough to renew the war against Pétion (1811). The
South won the encounter, thereby adding fuel to Christophe's rage.
[727] Three hundred prisoners he had captured he ordered tortured, and
the angry King abused and insulted his own officers and executed
several soldiers for having lost the battle. These actions caused more
defections, renewed punishments, and a more abiding rancor. As one
writer put it, the King "now regarded the mulattoes with a hatred so
deep and fiendlike, that nothing would satisfy the direness of his

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

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vengeance but the utter extermination of that race."[12] He even 643
ordered the execution of a mulatto woman in Gonaives because she 721
had prayed for the success of Pétion. 563

During the latter years of his reign his personal popularity waned 175
somewhat, owing to his relentless insistence upon efficiency and to 643
his increasing tendency to lose his temper. Defections to the South 167
occurred almost daily. The cultivators, comparing their never- 563
ceasing toil on Northern plantations with the reported liberty and leisure of life in the South, continually drifted away. So alluring was the paradise of ease (and poverty) of the neighboring realm that Christophe found it necessary to keep a cordon of soldiers along the borders of his kingdom to prevent desertions. His administration now embarked on actual persecution of colored people. Inflammatory pamphlets were spread abroad, designed to make the Negroes think that the mulattoes were planning to enslave them once again. Under this campaign of propaganda many light-skinned Northerners had to go into hiding.

Despite all discrimination, the important line was drawn between 175
cultivators who formed nine tenths of the population, and aristocrats 565
who, with the army, made up the remainder. The nobility, the directors of landed estates, and the generals directed the activities of other people, so that the colonial prejudice against manual labor was strengthened. Here lay the basis of a persistent Haitian attitude of [461]
mind: to work with one's hands is to show oneself a member of the masses; to direct others is the distinction of the upper class. Educa- [571]
tion, neglected under Dessalines altogether, was fostered by Christophe. He established a few schools, inviting as schoolmasters certain Englishmen familiar with the then popular methods of the Lancasterian system; but since the cultivators were busy on the plantations, only the children of aristocrats benefited by the limited educational system and the social distance between classes was increased.

A French commentator says that Christophe showed unusual in- 114
sight in devising for his kingdom "the only organization of which 175
an African society was capable," namely, a combination of military 642
despotism with certain benevolent inclinations, and territorial feudalism based upon a nobility created by the King. Actually, it suited not so much the African background of the people, which lay

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12. Dr. Jonathan Brown, *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo* (Philadelphia, 1837), II, 197.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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175 at least a generation behind them, but rather their complete lack of any experience in self-rule. The author continues:

> [471] In addition to the vanity of the black which was flattered by the distribution of principalities and duchies, there was the political thought which wished to fortify things by words. The most important sugar manufactories were distributed, with the property title, to the principal officers and civil agents of the government. Workers were allotted to these very much as were the Indians to the first Spanish conquerors. . . . Moreover, since African blood dominated in the North [that is, since there were few mulattoes and lighter-skinned people], the feudal lords, aided by the color of their skin, could enforce obedience to a yoke which in name only was modified [from slavery].[13]

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692 The social organization of Christophe's kingdom, then, was one of large properties, with all the feudalistic trappings, resting upon a solid base of wage-earning serfdom. In contrast to mediaeval feudalism, the king was here much more than *primus inter pares*. Thanks to the policy of Dessalines, most land had come into state ownership, so that the nobility received their estates by royal favor, and held them as leases only so long as the King pleased. As in the Middle Ages, the noblemen were petty monarchs within the district granted to their jurisdiction. Their freedom of action, however, was even here subject to scrutiny: detachments of Royal Dahomets[14] were stationed in every cantonment or parish, to enforce discipline, keep the King informed, and find their own subsistence without a drain on the royal treasury. In every district was set up a court of *sénéchaussée* to see that justice obtained.[15] The King's law, not the nobleman's private code, prevailed in the whole country.[16]

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[13] R. Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, *Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1846), II, 167–168.

[14] Organized after the model of the police force existing in France before 1789.

[15] These courts were composed of a royally appointed seneschal and his assistant, a king's procurer, and a clerk.

[671] [16] The Code Henry was promulgated on January 30, 1812. It consisted of seven parts: Civil, Commercial, Shipping and Maritime, Civil Process, Criminal and Police Process, Agricultural, and Military. In general the Code followed French precedent, but the section on Agriculture was Christophe's own. Sir James Barskett (in his *History of the Island of St. Domingo* [London, 1818], p. 413) calls this part "a thing unexampled among other nations." It reveals not only the King's absorption in the main economic enterprise of his state, but also his skill in devising an integrated functioning of a social order of nobility and serfs with a plantation economy based on money crops. This Agricultural Law regulated such diverse matters as the reciprocal duties of proprietors and cultivators, the policing of plantations, and the culture and preparation of the major crops. It set forth industry as the parent of virtue, and idleness as the source of vice.

Northern Haiti flourished magnificently under Christophe's 175
sternly benevolent rule. The King had that daring spirit of initiative 643
which was so generally lacking in later Haitian history; he had, in 642
addition, the power necessary to force through a new adjustment if 433
the old way showed defects.[17] He excited artificial wants among his
leaders by making nobles of them, and then compelled them to satisfy
these wants without ever slipping back to a lower standard of living.
Thirteen years of enforced labor and of order kept by a rigorously
effective police force gave northern Haiti the kind of prosperity
she had known in colonial days. Christophe encouraged commerce [438]
and protected foreign traders. He called in all debased coinage, substituting [439]
for it sound gold and silver currency. The revenue he raised
was larger than it had been since 1791, amounting to about $3,500,000 [652]
annually. Probably the most eloquent testimony to his success is the
fact that at his death, when the kingdom of the North was once
more united with the republic of the South, more than six million
dollars found their way into the republican treasury.

The Black King's economic system worked. It was based on a 175
social division of the people, with the masses doing manual labor, 565
and the aristocrats definitely set apart and recognized as upper class.
By 1820 Haiti was well on its way toward the caste system.

3. *Pétion* (*1807–1818*) 171

Almost all Latin-American countries in the nineteenth century 175
exhibited one common feature: an aristocratic landowning class 631
lording it over peons. Haiti did not follow this pattern. She had aristocrats and peasants, but the aristocrats did not own most of the land, and the peasants were not peons. If later rulers had kept the organization of economic life begun by Toussaint and developed by his fellow blacks, Dessalines and Christophe, it is almost certain that Haitian social evolution would have resembled that of the rest of Latin America, for it would not have been a great change from

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[17] Duraciné Vaval, "Le Roi d'Haïti Henri Christophe," in *Revue de la Société d'Histoire et de Géographie d'Haïti*, II, No. 3 (June 1931), p. 14, says that Haiti's periodic civil troubles and social misfortunes, both ending in a diminution of the state's autonomy, have been due to economic maladjustments. "Our weaknesses in political life derive from our immobility in material production." Immobility is an index of stagnation. Few rulers of Haiti have been at once powerful enough to overcome the immobility and wise enough to know what measures had to be taken. [114]

171 feudal holdings to absolute ownership of land by the influential. It is
175 strangely paradoxical that an aristocrat, the light-skinned Pétion,
631 representing the cultured group in society, broke the economic power of his own aristocratic class and made the former slaves not serfs but peasants. It is doubtful whether he intended either result.

175 Alexandre Pétion was the antithesis of Haiti's three eminent blacks
643 in all but military skill. Toussaint's genius as a fighter lay in his
159 surprise moves, Dessalines' in his recklessness, Christophe's in his bulldog determination; but Pétion was a great general because he knew when to retire and so lead his enemy into an exposed position. The three Negroes had been born in slavery; Pétion, coming of a cultured and sophisticated affranchi family, grew up in France. Dessalines was a crude ruffian by comparison, while in the face of Pétion's suavity Christophe's impetuousness seemed rankly uncouth. Where they bludgeoned, Pétion persuaded; where they hacked their way through opposition in the determination to gain an end, he graciously yielded and so won new friends. Tactful at every point, he survived even such contretemps as his refusal of the hand of the Emperor's daughter.

As leader of a young nation, Pétion might almost be said to have had too broad an understanding of human nature. He was a gentle ruler over his people; when they erred he did not punish or upbraid, but excused their misdeeds by assuming the cause to be some fatal compulsion over which they momentarily had no control. He had no wish to drive the nation to "success." Neither did he care to use his position for personal aggrandizement. His mind was supple and practical, disdainful of abstractions, undeluded by resounding slogans, fertile in compromise, not finical as to means, always unsurprised, exquisitely tactful. When crises arose to dismay his ministers, Pétion's philosophic calm was undisturbed.

Cynically tolerant, he gave office to political enemies if they chanced to be able. A representative of the topmost class of society,
[648] he managed to moderate antagonisms based on color. He gave sanctuary and financial succor to the Spanish-American liberator,
[871] Simón Bolívar; he established the foundations of an educational
[425] system; he defended the state against Christophe's power; he ruled constitutionally; and he gave land to his people, even to the humblest of them. When he died, his subjects for miles around came into Port-au-Prince, where they stood weeping about his palace, refusing

to be comforted. They had lost their best friend and their "*petit père*." 175

Dessalines would be emperor and Christophe king, but Pétion 643
was content to remain a simple president. He was an anomaly—as if 159
a Parisian of delicate sensibilities and mellow tolerance had somehow come to power with a darker skin in an alien land.

He has been highly praised and is worthy of eulogy. The fact remains that his country was rich when he came to power and poor when he died; united in 1806 and divided in 1818. Candor compels his admirers to admit that many of the calamities of the social and economic history of Haiti can be traced back to Pétion's administration.

The crucial act of Pétion was to parcel the land. From that policy 175
flowed the enduring consequences which became the predominant 423
socio-economic characteristics of Haiti. 421

Until Pétion's time the island had never known small properties. 178
Large estates had been the mark of social distinction in the French colony; Toussaint had kept the plantations large,[18] while Dessalines and Christophe had absorbed more and more land for the state, leasing it out in great blocks. The constitution of 1806[19] gave no indication of impending change, for it specifically declared all land to be the property of the Haitian nation. Within three years, however, the process of dividing and giving away the state's lands was well under way.

It would be illuminating to know what mental process in Pétion moved him to make so radical an about-face in land policy. The reasons he gave were, first, that the people had ably defended their country and so deserved a reward; second, that he wanted all the people to have a vital interest in the actual soil itself.[20] These may have been his only reasons. Others suggest themselves: the republic owed wages to its large standing army, which were more easily paid in land, of which the state had much, than in cash, of which it had little and progressively less; it would be much easier to keep peace in a country where men were free than where they were serfs; and the example of free ownership in the South would seem alluring enough

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[18] He permitted the leasing of plantations as small as fifty acres if the soil were especially rich. [427]

[19] December 27. This document was largely the handiwork of Pétion.

[20] The former explanation he consistently gave in his various messages to the Senate proposing progressive parcelings of the land; the latter he wrote to a friend, saying that he wished to "*enraciner chez tous l'amour du sol.*"

175 to Christophe's serfs in the North to cause defections ultimately
423 sufficient to win the civil war for the republic.[21]

Those who would read into Pétion's democratization of land
175 tenure the liberal convictions of a far-sighted statesman must ignore
643 the evidence of his earliest land acts. For two or three years nothing
423 was so apparent as that Pétion wished to please his friends, the
663 mulatto aristocrats. He not only had the Senate restore to their former owners all lands of which Dessalines had despoiled them, but he also agreed to a law authorizing a cash payment up to the full value of crops planted and then lost during the last year of the Emperor's rule.[22] By these concessions the President immediately wiped out the rancor left behind him by Dessalines, reversed that ruler's whole land policy, gained the support of thousands of aspirants for social position, and bound in personal loyalty to his régime all the colored leaders.

175 He went further. Insecurity of tenure under Dessalines had worried
423 landlords who were not actually mulcted of their estates, and so the
President undertook to guarantee security. Thereafter all sales of
[428] land were to be registered by government deed, and so confirmed to the purchaser in perpetuity; government courts would be empowered to settle disputes over payment of rents; proof of the death of the testator must be forthcoming before wills could be probated. Not even the single limitation on ownership—that if the proprietor of an estate should remain away from Haiti the state might lease his property and receive the income from it—disturbed them, for they were patriots enough, and poor enough, to feel that Haitians should live at home.

[illegible] As if this were not enough to please the landed gentry, the tax

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114 [21] Saint-Rémy, *Pétion et Haïti* (Paris, 1854-57), V, 165-166, suggests another reason, namely, that people will always be more ready to defend land they actually own than for an impersonal state. This sounds logical, but certainly the Negroes had fought ardently enough to drive out the French in 1803, landless though they were. Saint-Rémy continues: "And moreover, was it not time to dismember the enormous plantations which still bore the names of those colonists whose mother country might still at any moment descend to reclaim their heritage? And could this dismemberment be achieved otherwise than by giving the people an honorable title to it?"

423 [22] Two successive laws, February 9 and March 26, 1807, achieved these ends. The former specified that all persons who, by purchase or gift or legacy, had acquired land before November 1, 1803 (when Rochambeau surrendered) or since February 7, 1804 (when Dessalines had ordered a confirmation of all titles) should be newly assured of their rights to such holdings. There was a single, possibly unimportant, limitation: the acquisition must have been by Haitians *from Haitians*.

As if this were not enough to please the landed gentry, the tax of one quarter of the crop was abolished.[23] This tax worked mod- 175
erately well on great plantations with hundreds of workers and a 651
large annual budget, but it bore heavily, sometimes unfairly, on 471
smaller farms. To give up the government's fourth meant a tremendous drop in state revenues, but this was to be compensated by a new tax of ten *gourdes* (a gourde was then worth about five cents) on every thousand pounds of coffee sold in the country, and by an export tax on coffee. A man might raise sugar or make syrup, tafia (raw rum), and distilled rum, without paying any tax at all. Coffee culture required little careful cultivation, while sugar required a great deal; removing the tax from sugar would, it was hoped, encourage the cultivation of cane. The President was putting into practice the then novel idea of Adam Smith that the more freedom an enterpriser is allowed, the more he will produce, so that by pursuing his own self-interest he unintentionally benefits the state. To know definitely what taxes will be imposed, reasoned Pétion, is more of an inducement to a landlord than to face the double fluctuation of crop prices and the state's quarter. Small proprietors and sugar planters were now, like the larger landholders, attracted to Pétion's régime.

His final boon to proprietors, and one which Adam Smith would 175
not have approved, was that of governmental subsidies in bad years. 652
When prices of coffee and sugar were low, the state bought large quantities of these crops for the purpose of raising their price. The result was to increase the debt and to make the people feel that the state was responsible for individual economic success, rather than their own efforts.

These first concessions were all made to the important people of 175
the South—to the mulattoes, families of the old régime, persons who 423
desired economic prominence in order to bolster social position. The small folk of the Republic came next. The President recommended to the Senate the abolition of the law dating back to Toussaint's time which prohibited the holding of plantations of less than a minimum acreage. The Senate accordingly[24] reduced the minimum holding to thirty acres.[25] Actually this legislation did not bring

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[23] By a law of March 9, 1807. This tax was instituted by Toussaint and continued in effect by Dessalines and Christophe.

[24] On April 21, 1807.

[25] Or ten carreaux. Toussaint's law had allowed properties of fifty acres only in cases of exceptional fertility of land. See Note 18.

175 423 about any radical change, for few of the common people could find money to pay for thirty acres, while the well-to-do all wanted more.

[433] Every concession desired by the landed proprietors had now been granted—with the result that economic prosperity was showing a steady decline. It was only when this fact was abundantly apparent that Pétion took the step for which he has since been so fulsomely praised and so roundly criticized. By permission of the Senate, in a law of December 30, 1809, he began to give away state lands: fifteen acres of cultivable soil to every soldier in the army, to be held in perpetuity, with proportionately larger grants to higher officers.

Opposition immediately arose to this measure, and from expected quarters. The owners of great estates protested that if soldiers had farms, other people would soon want (and receive) them, leaving no workers on the large plantations. Social climbers protested, for when practically anyone can own land there is no particular social distinction in having it. Pétion's minister, Bonnet, opposed the permanent alienation of the chief financial resource of the state, proposing instead the grant of long-term loans to soldiers for the purchase of land. Pétion was not insensible to the logic of some of these objections; he said, however, that a nation which relied upon the willing labor of masses of its citizens was ultimately stronger than one which depended upon forced labor of any kind. As for the socially aspiring, he could ignore their arguments since they were not publicly and openly expressed. To his minister he pointed out that loans, if made, would in all probability never be repaid, so that one might as well face the reality at once and give people the land.

All through the next decade Pétion made new and democratic divisions of the land. Able generals were given large tracts, partly as wages, partly as a stimulus to productive agriculture on their part. By another enactment, military invalids were rewarded with land. Eventually most of the rest of the public domain was either put on sale at such moderate price that thousands of humble Haitians might purchase their bit, or was effectively occupied by people who "squatted" far up in the hills, out of official view.

175 471/24 The democratization of land led to new adjustments in the economic system. People who owned small farms would obviously not continue to raise sugar and coffee, but rather turn to food crops for immediate family consumption. Only the large plantations could carry on the cultivation of money crops. These in turn, no longer able

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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to command the forced labor of serfs, had to develop a new tech- 175
nique for securing manual labor. Legislation soon recognized the 471
new state of affairs by enactments which kept distinct *la grande* 24
culture and *la petite culture*. The former had to do with the production of sugar and coffee, from which the republic derived its wealth; the latter with small farming. *La petite culture* was simple cultivation of whatever the small owner wished to raise. Large-scale culture, on the other hand, became rather complicated.

Owners of great estates had to guide them only their experience 175
of slave days and of serfdom under Toussaint and Dessalines. Now 427
that both were gone, few planters were wealthy enough to pay 471
wages for day labor; a new variation was needed. It was forthcoming in the *métayer* system—a crop-sharing arrangement with tenants closely resembling that which prevails today in some parts of the United States. The owner leased his estate in large or small plots to tenants. Half the income went to the landlord and half to the tenant; but the landlord must furnish the sugar mill and other necessary machinery where cane was raised. Laws were passed to give a meas-
ure of security to the proprietor. The contract between him and the [675]
tenant (*fermier*)[26] must be signed before a civil official; the engagement must extend through the harvesting of one crop; tenants even then might not abandon their contracts except after notice of three months, with a declaration to the local official.

Punishments were stipulated for the breaking of contracts. A 175
tenant who had made an agreement and then abandoned the *habita-* 675
tion, even for a visit elsewhere, without a certificate attesting his 686
regularity, might be imprisoned for eight days the first time, a 692
month the second, and three months the third, such imprisonment to be spent in hard labor on public works. Any disputes arising between plantation owners and tenants were to be taken before the local justice. If they threatened to develop into serious cases, the justice was to notify the commandant of the nearest important town. A person who fomented disturbance of such agreements (the Haitian equivalent of "labor agitators," style 1810) might be imprisoned for a year, as also his accomplices. Commandants of each arrondissement must put down disorder as soon as requested by landlords, tenant farmers, or overseers. They must likewise make frequent patrols of

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[26] The word "fermier" must not be translated simply as "farmer"; the idea of a contract and a rental fee is implicit in the French word. [192]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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675 their districts, principally during the working hours of the day. They
692 were held responsible for all consequences of their own negligence.

This whole flow of legislation was designed primarily for the
175 protection of the great landed proprietors, yet there were other laws
671 which aided the masses. In former days workers had been coerced
466 through corporal punishment. This was by law now abolished. Temporary assignments of garden plots were required for each family of laborers; medical care must be provided at the expense of the planter; the aged and infirm must be guaranteed the right to keep their homes and gardens even though no longer able to work. Expectant mothers in the fourth month of pregnancy must be relieved of field work, with no limitation of their right to share in the estate's income; mothers of nursing children must be permitted to remain at home until the weaning of their infants.

175 A great concession to the workers was made by abolishing the
647 office of "inspector of cultures." In the days of Toussaint and Dessalines each district of the country had had its inspector, whose duty
241 it was to see that crop cultivation proceeded according to schedule.[27] This man's disapproval of conditions resulted in fines and personal chastisement. By abolishing the office Pétion effected a great saving in salaries, for there had been thousands of these inspectors; on the other hand, the watchfulness of the inspectors had kept agricultural production at a high level. With no officials to dog the footsteps of the workers, crops immediately fell off.

175 Pétion clearly expected la grande culture to be the prevailing mode
466 of agriculture in the republic. He fostered all kinds of legislation
24 regulating it, even aside from that already mentioned. For example,
a complete schedule was prepared for the division of income of the
656 estate.[28] But the entire system was too neatly worked out and artificial to be effective, particularly since it was not backed up with force. The threat of punishment removed, most workers began gradually, often deliberately, to sabotage the system. It was much more pleasant

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[27] Christophe followed his predecessors in keeping the district inspectors.

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[28] This could be very complicated. A tenant farmer might hire workers, and so have to share his half of the income with them. In such cases, the division of the money crops was to be made in kind or in money, at current prices, in the presence of the local justice, his assessors, and an officer of the gendarmerie. The workers' "fourth" was divided into portions of which three went to the first foreman, two to each of the skilled workers, one and a half to each male or female worker, and one half to each child laborer between ten and fourteen years of age.

to spend one's time in the allotted garden patch than to cultivate sugar cane steadily in the heat of the day. In a garden there was more variety to the work, and more independent decision; in a cane field all must work in unison to be effective. Moreover, the yield from the garden was a daily thing, while that of the cane fields came but once a year. Less and less were the overseers able to get the tenants away from their gardens and into the fields.

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Not all the sabotage came from the common folk. Landowners had their normal share of profit motive. The complex system of social security and benevolent stewardship ate away much of the income of the estate.[29] More important, the owners had had no experience of plantation management other than by directing forced labor. Corporal punishment was now abolished, but to the owner it was still unthinkable that there should be no coercion in plantation work. The laws protecting labor therefore left them bewildered, and they did not hold up their part of the system. Finding it expensive to maintain sugar machinery, impossible to engage docile workers, and necessary to finance social security, most of the "aristocrats" simply took the easier path of leasing their estates in small subdivisions, getting out of them what they could.

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Another unexpected result of Pétion's general policy was to shift the main produce of the republic from sugar to coffee. Sugar had for decades been the staple crop of southern Haiti; but its cultivation requires scrupulous care and expensive machinery. Coffee, on the other hand, grows wild both in the lowlands and at heights of three thousand feet. It is "wild" in the sense that plants spring from seeds dropped by parent trees, without careful planting. When it became obvious that the workers were not to be persuaded to regular work in the cane fields, the landlords broke up the large plantations so necessary to sugar cultivation. Each tenant farmer was almost sure to find coffee trees on his rented plot of land. He would harvest the berries but would do little or nothing to tend and improve the plants, as he did not own them. In French days coffee trees had been pruned, fertilized, grafted; the new Haitian farmer simply let nature take its course. Pétion's careful planning resulted consequently in an entirely unplanned, accidental, and automatic adjustment to new conditions of life.

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[29] That the landlords did not too vigorously pursue this system of care for the workers was due to their familiarity with similar care in slave days. [466]

175 642 178 433 Haitian writers sometimes praise Pétion for his democratic leanings, by implication criticizing Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe for their feudalistic notions. If the blacks were undemocratic, at least they had experience back of the system they selected for administering the land: their methods worked. Pétion's plan, on the contrary, admirable though it seemed to later "liberals," was unexpectedly disappointing. The national income declined; estates were steadily broken up and sub-leased to small farmers; sugar disappeared from the state's balance sheet, while coffee did not supply an equivalent income; discipline of the workers gave way to individualism. Although the whole legislative code favored the landlords, *la grande culture* crumbled. One is driven to conclude that Pétion simply tried one device after another—always the easiest he could find—to keep state economy functioning.

175 178 565 When Pétion came to power, the common folk of southern Haiti were serfs with a memory of slavery; when he died, they were peasants. At the beginning of his régime the mulattoes and other social aspirants felt they were struggling for very existence against the relentless policies of black rulers; as it closed they were beyond any doubt aristocrats, but by the same token progressively less well-to-do. No one any longer attacked their social pretensions; but the worldly wealth on which these pretensions were based was disappearing along with the country's prosperity, so that new criteria had to be developed.

175 671 As we have said, the keynote of Pétion's rule was persuasion. Where Dessalines ordered, Pétion suggested; where Christophe decreed, Pétion recommended. There is not a single act one could cite during his entire presidency which had the effect of tightening up the organization of the republic. When laws were not properly observed, instead of penalties being made more severe or sure of application, the laws themselves were calmly allowed to lapse. In fact, the period from 1807 to 1818 was one of transition, of experiment, of discovering a congenial way of life. Since it was clear that the mass of citizens were peacefully disposed and unambitious, the President was inclined to let custom rule in each little community. Laws were not repealed, but they were enforced only when general public opinion was clearly in their favor. At many points the upper class would have liked more disciplinary control over the masses and said so to Pétion; yet they realized that in a less than ideal world one

may not have all the heart desires. Under Dessalines there had been 175
stern discipline of the workers but no recognition of the aristocracy; 671
now under Pétion the people went their own inefficient way, but aristocratic eminence was happily recognized.

Examples of experimental legislation abound. Some proposals 175
succeeded but more failed. One of the partial successes was the 527
establishment of an agricultural holiday, *la fête de l'Agriculture*, to stimulate interest in good cultivation. Two months before the day set, the commandants of departments, arrondissements, and cantons, together with the justices of these divisions, were to nominate the laborer in each parish who had done the best work of the year. A prize medal was awarded not only for the sake of honoring him but also to stimulate his fellows. Similarly the officials would choose a child between seven and ten years of age, living on the best cultivated *habitation* in the district and belonging to parents most distinguished by their conduct and fondness for work, to be brought up and educated at the expense of the state. The annual feast was celebrated for many years after Pétion's death, but the officials became too lax to make careful selections of prize-winners. The holiday was kept, therefore, but served none of its original purposes.

As a case of legislation that failed may be cited the highly moral 175
measure encouraging, but not requiring, legitimate marriages among 582
cultivators rather than the customary informal union without ceremony. 588
The preamble of this law pointed out that legal marriages were

> the only means of assuring a person of all the advantages of society; of procuring consolation, care, and help in sorrows and in sickness; of making purity of customs, so necessary for the happiness of men and the conservation of their health, reign among the people; of steadily increasing the population of each habitation; of extending agriculture and of increasing production.[30]

The mass of people, however, had had no experience of legal marriage. In the time of slavery such unions would not have been respected by an owner who wished to sell his slaves, and Dessalines had seemed to care very little whether people married or merely lived together informally. It will shortly be seen in detail how lasting was this inertia of tradition.[31]

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[30] Cited in Saint-Rémy, op. cit., V, 29.
[31] See Part III, "Sex Relations and Home Life."

175 In his easygoing republic Pétion saw prosperity slowly wane,
433 cultivation decline, profits give way to deficits. He issued a large
652 amount of paper currency, and continually hoped for better times
534 which did not come. The days of large fortunes were over. The economic system affected the aristocrats: although they were still landowners, so also were thousands of common folk. The criterion of rank became increasingly not wealth, but rather pursuit of a career which demanded no manual labor. Distinctions, if they are to be effective, must be made on the basis of conditions not easily achieved by all and sundry. Education and good French met this requirement; even more did a light skin color.

175 Pétion, darling of the mulattoes though he was, never drew a color
643 line. There is no suggestion in any of his actions that he gave prefer-
641 ence in his appointments to people of his own color. He suppressed
563 at least one insurrection led by men who would have liked to stir up color prejudice. He often tried by quiet irony to make his people less sensitive to their complexions. It is eloquent testimony to his fairness that the 200,000 blacks in the republic never faltered in their love for him. They had ample reason to mistrust the haughty and ambitious colored people, some of whom had lorded it over them in colonial days; but they knew that the President did not share their pretentious attitude. One look at the North, ruled by a black, was enough to convince any Southerner that his happiness was safer in the hands of a mulatto than in those of a Negro ex-slave. At Pétion's death, therefore, there was no demur at the succession to power of another light-skinned man.

175 Haitians of a later day have discussed at great length the wisdom
643 of Pétion's parceling of state lands. His supporters (and they are
642 numerous) as well as his critics generally keep the controversy on the lofty plane of ideals, intentions, and hypothetical contingencies. Pétion is praised for being generous to humble folk where all other rulers of his country had been severe; for being a realist in accepting and adjusting his measures to the limitations of the average Haitian's character; for building a patriotism upon love of one's own small plot of land; for ruling constitutionally, with his Senate, rather than dictatorially. Most especially, Pétion is the one man among the early rulers who seemed to have any realization of the human values involved. Material gain is desirable but not at the expense of liberty. Freedom means something, even in poverty.

The critics do not challenge Pétion's good intentions or integrity.

they even comment upon his unselfish generosity, which seems to 175
have been entirely free of any desire for personal gain. They accuse 643
him rather of taking the easiest course—that of trying to pacify every 642
group in the republic: the masses, by giving them land and removing any external compulsion to work on it; the army, by making their enlistment profitable; the aspiring aristocrats, by validating their titles to estates and not challenging their prestige with a demand for responsibility. Strong states, the critics argue, are built on lines of discipline, not of perpetual yielding.

From an economic point of view a more valid criticism would ask 175
the simple question: what was the practical result of his policies? 433
Under the three previous Negro rulers agriculture had prospered, for these men kept state lands intact and forced the population to work; under Pétion, on the contrary, prosperity steadily declined with the division of land and the removal of compulsion. To expect a body of illiterate, inexperienced ex-slaves automatically to develop such economic virtues as industry, foresight, and thrift in a land which never knew any of these is not realistic, but merely quixotic. The Haitian critic Magloire implies that Pétion was either completely 114
and cynically indifferent to common graft or else naively confident 643
that men newly free would somehow be preternaturally honest. He 423
goes into detail:

> Lands were distributed free, without order or method, each person taking what came his way and establishing himself as he could; graft and jobbery, under varied guises, governed the granting of concessions. As for properties in the towns, some people established themselves in upstairs apartments and others in ground-floor ones, without bothering to think of the lawsuits which might result from this disorder. In the sales made by the State, 50 and 100 and 200 gourdes were paid for real estate which was worth 10,000 and 20,000 and 40,000 gourdes or more. The administration put up for sale the property of towns, of communes, and of the State. Even buildings occupied in colonial days by officials, buildings whose construction had cost considerable sums, were bestowed on the people. . . .
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> By a too great fractioning of the national domain, and carried away by [182]
> the influence of false egalitarian and democratic ideas, Pétion brought [24]
> about what a modern writer calls "the forcible neglect of agriculture"[30] throughout the Republic.[31]

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[30] J. N. Léger, *Haïti: son histoire et ses détracteurs* (New York, 1907), p. 162.

[31] Auguste Magloire, *L'Erreur révolutionnaire et notre état social* (Port-au-Prince, 1909), pp. 160–163.

175 Practically every contemporary foreign visitor contrasted the
114 divergent policies of Christophe and Pétion to the overwhelming
433 advantage of the former. One Englishman, intent upon defending the Negro against the charge of "natural indolence," went so far as to say that the majority of the people in the republic, although "possessed of small estates, on which they earned their living," were yet no less diligent than the forced laborers on Christophe's plantations in the North.[34] His only proof of this contention, however, was the greater volume of commerce at Port-au-Prince, capital of the republic, than at Cap-Henry (now Cap-Haïtien), capital of the kingdom.

175 The economic case is strongly against Pétion. The decline of
433 large-scale agriculture, the empty treasury, governmental purchase
652 of surpluses when prices were low, debasing the coinage[35]—by such
642 practical proofs, the republic was vastly less efficient than the stern dictatorship of the kingdom. But Pétion's people had freedom, while Christophe's were serfs. And Pétion's republic endured, to become reunited Haiti. The kingdom perished with Christophe.

4. *The Final Effort toward Plantation Life (1818–1826)*

175 The mantle of Pétion fell in 1818 upon the shoulders of his
643 meticulous secretary and minister, Jean-Pierre Boyer. Two years
642 later, upon the death of Christophe, the kingdom of the North was once again united, without a struggle, to the South.[36] It is conceivable that the refined mulatto Boyer might have infused into his people a spirit of industry and ambition, now that tranquillity reigned after fourteen years of separation and warfare. The people of the North had had a long experience of intense activity, while those of the

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[34] W. W. Harvey, *Sketches of Hayti; from the Expulsion of the French, to the Death of Christophe* (London, 1827), pp. 361 ff.

[652] [35] Pétion's coins were so easily imitated that the country was inundated with counterfeit money. The government issued only five million dollars worth of this currency, but in 1818 twelve millions were in circulation, the surplus having been fabricated in Europe and the United States.

[175] [643] [642] [649] [36] In 1822–23 Boyer likewise succeeded, with little fighting, in bringing the Spanish two thirds of the island (Santo Domingo) into the republic. For the first time since 1697 the whole island was really unified under one rule. Toussaint had held it in 1800–2 and the Haitians claimed it thereafter, but real unity did not come until Boyer's time, when all the Spanish colonies in the New World were breaking away from their mother country. Santo Domingo regained its independence in 1844 shortly after the abdication of Boyer.

South in general had the most loyal feeling toward a government 175
which had been benevolently generous to them. A blend of the two 642
might have been fruitful. 643

It was not any want of patriotism that caused Boyer to miss his
great opportunity but rather a defect of ability. Desiring, like Pétion,
to lead rather than to drive his people, he nevertheless lacked even
more than his former chief the force of personality which might
have persuaded them to work hard for the greater glory of Haiti.
Despising the brutal compulsion exercised by Dessalines and Christophe,
which he regarded as savage and too closely resembling the
earlier methods of slave owners; wishing to emulate solely the
gentleness of his predecessor, Boyer hoped for a number of years
that his people would become industrious of their own accord.
His hopes were frustrated. During his twenty-five-year presidency 175
the mass of Haitians became so indifferent to pecuniary inducements 433
that little work could be got from them beyond that required to
produce necessary food. As commerce declined, the President was [652]
driven to fresh issues of debased currency and to the opening of
mines in different parts of the country, though he knew that the [316]
richest mine Haiti possessed was its still fertile soil.

For the first seven years Boyer pursued a policy based on hopeful 175
expectation, refusing to inaugurate any of the forceful measures of 652
his black predecessors. But by 1823 the treasury, enriched though it 24
had been by the surplus from Christophe's exchequer, was empty; 433
in 1824 disbursements exceeded income. Convinced in 1825 that his 466
laissez-faire policy was failing to produce results, he decided to heed
the insistent counsel of those (including most of the aristocratic,
landholding class) who advised the reëstablishment of a coercive
system of agriculture. His officials showed him that nowhere in the
country were sugar plantations any longer being cultivated on a
great scale—except for a few estates run by government officials who
could command the forced labor of convicts. The policy of offering
cultivators a fourth of the total crop of a plantation as wages was
luring practically no laborers to work.[37] Even the few owners who
offered the fourth plus daily wages had no success. Quite simply, the
average Haitian preferred to be his own master, working only when
he wished, and particularly working only for himself and his family.

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[37] This fourth in wages must not be confused with the quarter in taxes abolished by Pétion. See page 48 for a discussion of the quarter-crop wage system.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 24 671 643 Convinced at last that the easygoing policy was a failure, Boyer devised by way of remedy a new set of agricultural laws. Where his predecessors in the North had forced action first and then issued simple laws to fix the practice, Boyer, always cerebral rather than active, planned a complete Code which was designed to call forth action. On May 1, 1826, following an address by the President, the Senate issued the Code Rural, an ingenious attempt of Boyer and his secretary-general, Inginac, to reorder the agricultural life of Haiti.

Never again in the history of the country was so detailed a scheme worked out. It was an attempt on a grand scale to order the life of all people for common prosperity. In addition to its own broad scope and elaborate detail, it was fortified by almost unanimous support among the aristocracy, not only the ex-peers of Christophe's defunct kingdom, but also the large landowners of the republic who under Pétion had never known large incomes. In considering the Code, one cannot restrain a certain admiration of Boyer's ingenious mind. Yet it marked the end rather than the beginning of plantation agriculture, for it utterly failed of its purpose. It was the impressive monument over the tomb of state control.

To examine it further, we must desert the world of men for one of pure economic device. The journey is hardly one of discovery, for Boyer and his aides were simply attempting to freshen up for use the methods which had served colonial Saint-Domingue and feudal Haiti. For all the tedium of a voyage through the mazes of an economic plan which came to naught, the Code will be found significant as marking the end of a way of life, even when the way which succeeded it had already begun to take form.

175 671 24 566 693 The dominating principle of the Code was the Haitian's "obligation" to work on the land. To this end, the worker was once more legally attached to the soil. Every individual who was not a public functionary, and who had not private means or a profession—in plain English, every Haitian except the aristocrat, the official, the artisan, and the soldier—was bound to the land with no right to separate himself from it except in case of imminent danger. An agricultural worker might apply to the local *juge de paix*[38] for permission to quit the countryside to live in a town or village, but the judge was not to give the permission without being assured of the morality of the

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[38] A functionary who combined the offices of [illegible] judge, justice of the peace, and recorder.

applicant, of his regular conduct, and his ability to maintain himself 175
economically in the town. Land laborers might not send their children 671
to school or have them apprenticed in a town without a certifi- 24
cate from the same judge. Under no pretext might a worker establish 566
a shop or sell his produce in the countryside; certain exceptions were 693
made of necessary articles of food and home manufacture. No laborer
might build a home in rural parts except on the plantation to which
he was attached.

An individual, once placed by the government in the category of "cultivator," might never be removed from that class except by official authorization. Even with the consent of the proprietor and the agricultural administrator of the district, he was not to quit the estate to which he was bound for more than eight days.

We may further note in the Code that coöperative enterprise 175
among the workers is forbidden. Anticipating the possible tendency 671
of laborers to set up what in modern times would be called a pro- 474
ducers' coöperative, presumably to lapse thereafter into laziness, the 686
Code requires that every worker engage himself individually by 566
authentic contract to the service of a proprietor or lessee. Such
engagements for la grande culture are not to be for less than three years, or more than nine. Penalties for infractions of these rules are fines, imprisonment, or forced labor on public works in the chief town of the commune.

The Code directs the management of agricultural property and 175
grazing establishments,[39] also the making of contracts between the 671
proprietor and his hirelings. Rural police are established, in imitation 625
of Christophe's Dahomets, to act as inspectors of plantations and of 421
the workers on them.

The section repressing vagrancy is very full. All persons not 175
proprietors or lessees, yet living in rural parts without having made 686
a contract with some producer, are classed as vagabonds, to be 24
arrested and taken before the magistrate. This official will warn them that by law they are bound to make a contract, and that if they refuse they will be sent to prison. Should a vagabond persist in refusing to sign a contract after eight days of confinement, he is condemned to labor on public works until he agrees. Should the prisoner be a minor, he will be sent to his parents.

[39] This latter item was inserted as an adjustment to one of the primary occupations of the Spanish end of the island.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

[1804-1843]

175 A cultivator who loafs on his assigned job shall spend twenty-four
566 hours in jail for his first offense and lose his wages; for a second
671 offense he must work on public projects. Field labor shall be regularly carried on from Monday morning until Friday evening, except
24 for legal holidays; work begins at dawn, continues except for a half-hour at breakfast until noon, stops then for two hours, and is
[843] once more resumed until sunset. Pregnant females are to be assigned to light work only, and after the fourth month of pregnancy need
[841] do no field work. Four months after delivery, a mother is to return to field work, but with three hours a day less than before, until she has weaned her child. Disobedience and insult to overseers are punishable by imprisonment. Since Saturdays, Sundays, and holi-
[527] days are free, there is to be no dancing or any other festivity by night or day from Monday through Friday.

175 On each estate is to be a hierarchy of directors, all of whom the
671 workers shall obey. In ascending order, these men are drivers (or
473 squad foremen),[40] jobbers, sublessees, lessees, proprietors and man-
24 agers, overseers of districts, and police.

In establishing a system of remuneration Boyer kept the accus-
175 tomed method of allotting a proportion of the marketed crop to the
45 workers in lieu of hourly or daily wages. In any season from a
24 quarter to a half of the gross receipts of the estates was to go to the laborers, the exact proportion in any year to be determined by the government. It was assumed by Boyer and Inginac that there would be an added inducement to work if the laborers' share were distributed not equally, but rather in proportion to the merit and worth of the individual, these evaluations to be made by the recommendation of overseers.

175 Enforcement of the Code was placed in the hands of local justices
692 and the army. Soldiers were to be assigned to each plantation, re-
24 ceiving their living from it, in return preserving order and routine. Although the whip was once more prohibited, steady labor might still be enforced by other means; the law definitely stated that soldiers were to discipline the lazy, the lawless, and the vagrant. Local justices were to deal with any civil difficulties arising in the execution

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[192] [40] The word "driver" was commonly used in West Indian slave colonies with no other meaning than that attached to the word when one speaks of a man "driving" his horses. It is not necessary to beat a horse to make it go properly; a word of direction may suffice.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

of contracts. It is worthy of note that soldiers assigned to estates were 175
responsible for their actions not to any civil authority but only to 642
their military superiors. 24

On paper, at least, the Code meant for the worker a return to the 175
serfdom instituted by Toussaint and continued by his black successors.[41] 566
Boyer's new system was richer in detail than Christophe's, but it clearly owed much to that monarch's practical scheme. There 671
is a vital difference, however: serfdom under the Negro rulers worked because discipline was enforced; Boyer's effort to reintroduce it was an abject failure.

Many commentators have praised the Code as able and intelligent. Since the effort to revive familiar practice did not succeed, it is important to understand the reasons for failure of an almost perfect paper plan; one similar to the system which had functioned in all Haiti from 1798 to 1806, and in northern Haiti until 1820.

To begin with—and this was in great measure its final downfall—the workers simply ignored it. When Toussaint had first introduced serfdom, many Negroes quietly moved up into remote hills where they would be out of sight; a good number had remained away from surveillance, raising children who cherished their own independence of action. The influence of this group gradually spread. Moreover, for nineteen years in the South, ever since Pétion had first become president, the masses had had increasing experience of economic freedom. There is no doubt that the majority of the people preferred a low standard of living with liberty to great national prosperity depending on personal compulsion. Northern "cultivateurs" had known force and efficiency under Christophe, but they, too, preferred their five-year experience of easygoing life in reunited Haiti. Such complete, antagonistic inertia toward the law made its enforcement impossible. Individual cases of sabotage might be dealt with, but not wholesale refusal of the group to sign contracts.

Aside from this, too much land had already been given away 175
throughout at least half the country to make possible a fair and 423
efficient functioning of the Code. Any forced-labor system would have had to depend on large plantations. Since Pétion had divided

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[41] R. Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, "La République d'Haïti: ses dernières révolutions; sa situation actuelle," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, XV, No. 4 (Nov., 1843), p. 13, called it "l'adscription à la glèbe," which it certainly was. The whole Code was designed to prevent any further parcelling of the land and any further lapse into idleness on the part of the workers. [14]

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423 up so many of these, there was no way short of a revolution to reconstitute the now parceled estates. Obviously the Code did not envisage the control of serfs by small property owners, yet there were more small owners than large.

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466 In the third place, the Spanish-speaking masses of the eastern part of the island had never experienced the kind of forced labor with which most Haitians had been at one time or another familiar. Their noncoöperation made enforcement difficult.

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647 Finally, the administration of so detailed a plan called for the establishment, at once and yet in complete order, of a fully trained corps of bureaucrats, perfectly coöperating with each other, most of them educated, and all incorruptibly honest. If every literate person in the state had been drafted for service, Boyer could not have filled all the offices required by the Code.

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434 After brief and piecemeal experience with the law in operation, moreover, even the few remaining large landholders turned against it. While they approved the provisions for forced labor, they discovered that to turn over to the workers a quarter or half of the annual crop, in a falling world market, gave too slim a profit.[42] Without the support even of its original sponsors, failure of the law was inevitable.

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652 These factors alone would have been enough to kill the Code; but its real death blow came from an entirely different quarter. The year before the agricultural laws were passed, Boyer had achieved what he considered to be a political master stroke. He had made a financial settlement with France whereby Haiti, in return for a large sum in cash and regular annual payments for sixty years thereafter, should receive full recognition of independence from France; also the former mother country would renounce all claims to any properties in the country. Boyer had felt that the chief debilitating influence on the political and economic life of his people was the constant dread that France might one day return to claim her lost colony. To rid the nation of that incubus, therefore, seemed to him a high feat of statesmanship, no matter what the financial cost.[43]

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[245] [42] Coffee, now the staple crop of Haiti, was meeting competition from the other coffee-producing countries of the world. To put the sugar manufactories into working condition again called for more money than was available.

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[648] [43] Boyer's hand was forced to a certain extent by France, which had been exerting diplomatic pressure upon Haiti; the President, however, seemed to regard the settlement as a distinct coup.

175 The result was entirely different from Boyer's expectations. As a French critic graphically puts it, the Haitians
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> 703 who had never had more than a borrowed energy—that inspired by fear of French invasion—when they saw themselves freed, by a solemn treaty, from all attack on their coasts, seemed to allow their arms to drop relaxed at their sides, saying, *Let's take a rest.* The soldier who up till now had squeezed his body into a uniform and had subjected himself to European discipline, shouldering his arms, staring straight ahead as if seeing nothing, now began to leave unbuttoned the uniform which choked him, dragged a mattress into his sentry-box so that he might sleep through his watch, and let his cross slip to the earth never to pick it up again.[22]

175 In short, the Haitian army as a disciplined force ceased to exist, and
701 with it all authority of its officers. Boyer had counted upon the
703 army to enforce the provisions of the Code Rural, but now a soldier's
671 life was a paid sinecure. By gaining political security Haiti had in-
433 advertently lost its last chance of economic prosperity through a system of forced labor.

175 Wherever the Code was put into partial operation, revenue from
423 plantations continued to decline. The price of real estate dropped proportionately. It was a simple matter for workmen who had
433 signed contracts to avoid carrying out their stipulations, and just as
435 simple to evade the law requiring fifteen acres' minimum for a single
466 holding. Practically every Haitian wanted to own a bit of land; once he had acquired his bit, however small, he had (or so he felt) earned an exemption from directed labor.

175 Only on estates near the few big towns, where government
671 officials were concentrated, was there much pretense of trying to enforce the Code. Sentries at the gates of Port-au-Prince were
625 authorized to confiscate plantains, yams, or fruit brought by any
661 worker who, in contravention of the Code, had strayed to market on a forbidden day, but sentries soon acquired the habit of not seeing countryfolk who passed the gates. Reports kept cropping up that rural policemen were robbing poor cultivators of their coffee under pretense of protecting them from the penalties for breach of the law; this suggests that the Code was used rather for graft than for the stimulation of agriculture.

175 By and large, however, the Code was merely ignored. Agents
671 could not be found who were willing to stand in any community

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625 [22] Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, Saint-Domingue, II, 181.
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175 against almost unanimous public opinion opposing enforcement. In
671 1828 it was reported that dancing, which the Code had strictly
625 limited to week ends, was a nightly diversion near the capital. One
535 of the principal dancing resorts was the house of a captain of rural
517 police, the very man who was supposed to repress such amusements.[45]

Boyer had done his best, and his best was merely a good piece of
175 office work. When his Code failed to operate, he could think of
178 nothing further to suggest for the economic rehabilitation of Haiti.
24 The last fifteen years of his administration witnessed a gradual lapse
433 into that small-scale farming which was to be characteristic of Haiti
for the remainder of the nineteenth century. By comparison with
former standards, production and steady industry had both fallen
off since Boyer came to the presidency. The testimony of visiting
foreigners is unanimous on the decline of industry.

175 The British consul, Mackenzie, said in 1827 that there was very
114 little field labor then being done, and that only elderly people,
435 principally aged "Guinea Negroes" long accustomed to steady work,
461 carried on the tradition. No measures of the government could
464 induce young people born in Haiti to labor or to change from their
184 "habitual vagrancy."[46] Another Englishman, James Franklin, remarked in 1828 that land values throughout the republic had greatly declined because no one could make a profit within any moderate time. Labor was high, he writes, for ordinary wages did not attract the workers who preferred idleness. (This word is certainly unfair: it was work at their own bidding which they preferred, not idleness.) Government lands lay untilled, no one evincing the slightest desire to purchase or utilize them. Franklin continues:

> 114 Land also in the possession of individuals is similarly circumstanced; and
> 175 those who are large proprietors cannot effect a sale of any produce which
> 433 they may have beyond the quantity which they can consume; consequently
> 423 a proprietor may have an immense extent of land, and yet be quite unable
> 425 to derive any benefit from it by cultivation, or to convert it into money, for the want of purchasers. Thus . . . there is no individual wealth in the country, because, although a man may have very large landed possessions, still those possessions are unavailable, for they produce him nothing, as he
> can seldom find persons disposed either to occupy or purchase them.

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[534] [45] Although dancing is spoken of here as an amusement, it is highly probable that at least a part of it had connection with the Vodun religion.

[241] [46] Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Hayti* (London, 1830), I, 100. Mackenzie is clearly exaggerating, unless by "field labor" he means work on plantations, in contrast to farming on small plots.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

can seldom find persons disposed either to occupy or purchase them. There
are some instances of proprietors leasing their lands to persons who undertake 175
to cultivate them, for which they receive about one-third of the 427
produce; but this is far from being general, and I imagine can only be accomplished by military men who have the command of troops, and who are thereby enabled to till them by working parties daily sent out for that purpose.[47]

An interesting side light is provided by a Quaker visitor, Candler, 175
who in 1842 wrote that he was struck by the entire equality which 114
seemed to exist between servant and master. Every workman was ad- 466
dressed in courteous manner, as "*mon fils*."[48] On inquiry, Candler was told that the profits of planting were good that year, laborers were scarce, and it was therefore "necessary to conciliate all by kindness, or no work would be done."

A particularly grim account of the state of cultivation near the 175
close of Boyer's administration (1842) is given by a Frenchman: 114

> The fields of Haiti are dead. There where under slavery thousands of 433
> tons of sugar were made, now one sees only a few crops and a little syrup 249
> to turn into raw rum. Lively growths of cactus cover with thorns the acres 674
> of cane, of fields, of pastures deserted by the hand of man; the cactus in- 311
> vades the towns, coming even up to the heart of the cities, flourishing in 461
> the midst of ruins, as if to insult the inhabitants. . . . On the one hand, no one cultivates with regularity, because everyone is discouraged by the thefts of cane and fruit by people without any moral discipline, and in a country without police; while on the other hand, people complain of being poor, and of not being able to devote enough money to indispensable improvements. . . . And if the proprietors cannot even make work progress, imagine the condition of the poor![49]

As the people grew individually poorer, the value of the land sank 175
until it was useless for an owner to try to prevent squatting on his 435
estate. Holdings grew smaller and smaller, in spite of the prohibition
on sales of real estate in parcels less than fifteen acres. Good land 423
might be had in every part of the island quite cheaply, much of it [671]
even from the government which had enacted the restrictive law. [425]
Any man not satisfied with his condition as a paid laborer might, if

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[47] James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti (Saint Domingo)*, (London, 1828), p. 313.

[48] John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti* (London, 1842), p. 37.

[49] V. Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti: résultats de l'émancipation anglaise* (Paris, 1842), II, 263 ff.

175 he could save or borrow the money, buy a small patch and become a
425 freeholder in his own right. And in the mountains, if one were
willing to endure isolation, one could get much land by squatter's claim.

175 A vivid indication of the declining economic condition of the
country will be found in the actual scale of real-estate prices. In the
436 eighteen-twenties the finest land in the republic did not sell for more
423 than $60 an acre, even when contiguous to a port for shipping or extremely fertile. Such a price would have been ridiculous in the days of the French colony. Farms in the plains and mountains, suitable for cocoa and cotton, could be had in Boyer's time for $20 or $30 an acre in any quantity from ten to five hundred acres. In the rich Artibonite Valley small plots for horticultural purposes sold for $40 an acre; indigo and cotton land rarely brought over $30; and a complete cotton plantation which had borne richly in colonial days sold for from $12 to $20 an acre. In the North, despite its fertility and more careful cultivation under Christophe, land seldom brought more than $40 or $45, while pasture lands could scarcely find purchasers at $40. A lot in Port-au-Prince with a frontage of sixty feet and a depth of fifty, well situated for trading purposes, brought only $200.[50] Fifteen years later even these prices were fantastically high, for by then no one was wealthy enough to purchase an estate.

5. *Lapse into Peasantry (1827–1843)*

463 "Peasant" is one of those words whose meaning everyone knows
yet whose definition is never precise. It clearly carries the connotation
241 of farming the land by conservative, generally uneducated, persons whose families have for generations lived on the same plot of earth without any great ambition to move away or change their economic lot. It means small ownership. And most particularly it means a comparatively low social status, for we think of peasantry as existing only in those countries which have a clear-cut social class system, with a stratification which would make it difficult for a person to move from one class to another. His land is to the peasant both home and living; his household is dependent almost solely upon the product of its own labor. He is generally conceived to be too complacent, if not too ignorant or too dull, to take advantage of commercial opportunities which might bring him wealth. "It is increasingly

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[50] These figures for 1824–28 are from Franklin, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

recognized that the really important characteristics peculiar to the 443
peasant are his sentiments and attitudes, the intense attachment to his 241
native soil and family tradition, which, even in the economic sphere,
take precedence over the desire for individual advancement and
gain."[51]

Haiti in 1804 was still a country of large estates, and Dessalines and 175
Christophe strove to keep it so. Under the active generosity of 24
Pétion and the passive indifference of Boyer after his Code Rural had 423
failed, few great plantations were left intact. The recorded donations 671
of these two presidents to their generals, civil functionaries, and 425
lesser officers, are as follows:[52]

134 grants of	150 carreaux	(about 450 acres).	Total: 59,300 acres.
176	35	105	18,480
639	30	90	57,510
711	25	75	54,325
2,322	20	60	139,320
8,000	5	15	120,000

Grand total: 448,935 acres.

Haiti followed French law rather than British, so that the rule of 175
primogeniture did not prevail. It requires only a moment's reflection 428
to see that even within a single generation the thousands of small 178
properties noted in the table would be subdivided many times, since 423
a father apportioned his land to all his sons. By 1842 it is probable
that not a single plantation of the size common in colonial times was
still intact.[53] On the testimony of numerous government officials and (311)
commandants of arrondissements, it was estimated in that year that
46,610 small landed properties were under fair cultivation.[54] If the [162]
population at that time be estimated at 800,000, seven eighths of
whom were engaged in agriculture, there would accordingly be
about fifteen people (including children) to each rural property. But

A large number of small estates are left out of this account, which are said 175
to be *badly* cultivated, or neglected. Taking the number of each separate 241

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[51] C. von Dietze, "Peasantry," in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, XII, 50.

[52] This table is compiled from figures cited in Armand Thoby, *La Question agraire en Haïti* (Port-au-Prince, 1888), *passim*, and Dr. P. Dalencour, *Le Sauvetage national par le retour à la terre* (Port-au-Prince, 1923), p. 18.

[53] See Raymond Renaud, *Le Régime foncier en Haïti* (Paris, 1934), pp. 42–45.

[54] Candler, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

3: Loyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

175 family on an average, at 5 persons, husband, wife, and three children, we
241 arrive at the conclusion, that the head of every third family in the state is
engaged in cultivating his own freehold; a proportion of independent
[311] proprietors, such as perhaps scarcely any other country in the world can
exhibit. The number of acres cultivated by these small proprietors, varies
[231] from 9 to 30; many of them keep horses, cows, and goats: they raise suffi-
cient provisions of the bread kind, such as yams, plantains, and bananas, for
[437] the main support of their families; they kill hogs for meat, and they dispose
[431] of their coffee, cotton, hemp, castor oil, and fruit, at the public market for
money, to purchase clothing, furniture, and other necessaries. The houses
[342] they live in, though poorly furnished, are decent habitations; and many of
them have gardens attached, neatly fenced in with bamboo, or with log-
wood, or aloe hedges.[35]

175 If these figures are even approximately accurate, the majority of
423 the people of Haiti had not yet become peasants in the sense of being
427 landowners, for in the statement cited only a third of the people
owned their land. Another large group, however, possibly a third of the population, were squatters, living on land which technically belonged to someone else but from which they were never ejected. The remaining third, excluding the town and village dwellers, were in the intermediate stage between hirelings and peasants. Some worked for a given rate of wages, but the larger number worked for shares of the produce on the land of large proprietors.

175 The crop-sharing system (Americans of the twentieth century call
473 it share-cropping) of the 'thirties and 'forties was an automatic but
427 temporary adjustment worked out in perfect disregard of the Code
Rural. In general, two arrangements prevailed. By one the laborers
24 worked in return for half the total produce of the estate, raising food
for themselves in gardens provided by the owner; under the other they worked for a quarter of the produce, the proprietor guaranteeing to keep them in provisions. There was no general concurrence in Haiti at the time as to which plan was the more economical to the laborer and his family. Certainly both schemes were prejudicial to large crops of coffee and sugar, and therefore to the economic prosperity of the proprietors and the state; since this was so, the crop-sharing expedient was short-lived. Workers participating in it lived in the huts and cabins which, under the old régime, had been inhabited by their slave ancestors. As these fell to pieces others, cheaper and less soundly built, were constructed to take their place.

The crop-sharing system, economically debilitating though it was,

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[35] *Ibid.*

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

The crop-sharing system, economically debilitating though it was,
had one great advantage to the laborer: he felt himself free and independent, 175
with the right to engage himself to any man or to refrain 427
from working altogether. No longer was he bound to the soil of one 461
plantation, forced to labor under a "driver," forbidden to dance or 24
to sleep when the mood seized him. This new freedom imparted to 466
him a self-consequence which made him, in his own estimation,
almost as important as a freeholder. The master could not say to his
men, "Go into such a field and dig cane holes. The clouds are
gathering and we must get in the young plants"; or, "Weed such a
field," or "Prune the coffee trees today." Neither could he send a
band of young people at his discretion to pick the coffee berries as
they ripened, or to cull the bad berries, when pulped and dried, from
the good. Every man was, so to speak, master of his own house and
his own hours, considering himself at liberty to work with his
family at almost any time and in any manner he pleased.

Herein lay the fatal defect of the crop-sharing system. There was 175
no way of coming to an agreement among the laborers on an estate 427
as to the amount of labor to be performed by each. One man was 24
weaker than another; one more disposed to drink or to loaf than 461
another. The whole group of, say, twenty families was to share in
common the half or the quarter of the gross produce; but who should
measure the exact proportion which would fall in justice to each
family?

These annual disagreements led to a compromise which ultimately 175
broke down even the moderate-sized estates. The proprietor, in 473
order to avoid disputes, divided his fields among his laborers, allowing 427
one family five acres, another ten, a third twenty, according to 24
the nature of the land and the sort of produce which could be raised
upon it. True, the proprietor lost by this division all the benefits of 425
concentrating labor in a particular field at a particular season; also, 461
if he wished to have necessary work done in haste which required a
large number of laborers, he had to bribe them (generally by a drink
of rum or tafia). Obviously, when such difficulties stood in the way
of necessary repairs and improvements, the proprietors simply preferred
to allow their estates to deteriorate. Like the workers, they
acquired an attitude of not worrying about the future; unlike the
frame of mind of the workers, their attitude came from resigned
acceptance of the inevitable, not from preoccupation with the present.

Certain astute proprietors tried to get as many families together as
could act in concert without jarring or jealousy, and to induce them,

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

175 by permission, to do as much work as possible for his and their own
473 interests. In a few cases the success of such efforts was tolerably good;
427 but one worker disposed to be sullen or idle, or even not physically
strong, might throw the whole scheme into disorder. One's own
24 profits would be cut by the misdeeds of others even when one had
426 himself been industrious. This caused a decline of incentive, some-
461 times among a whole group of potentially good workers, because one or two of the number shirked. Probably the most patent evil of such arrangements was that every laborer realized that he did not suffer as directly for idleness or neglect as when working for himself; his fellow workers shared the consequences of his misconduct in some degree, and his employer in a still greater measure. The driving force of individual responsibility was removed.

[692] Boyer and Inginac, foreseeing just such disorder, had tried to
[246] provide against it in the Code Rural by giving summary powers to local judges to inflict penalties upon lazy or malingering workers. Quite aside, however, from the loss of time and the inconvenience to both parties in going constantly to a judge for his decision, the proprietor was afraid to act on this principle to any extent, since if he did so he might lose his laborers altogether.

175 It was a rare proprietor, then, who could hope to make much of a
473 fortune out of his plantation. More and more the landowners, having
427 subdivided their fields, grew lax in overseeing them. The workers,
24 freed from constant supervision, accustomed by long habit to living
in one hut, and unconsciously developing a mentality which made
466 them feel, as did American squatters on frontier lands, that they had
425 a right to the land they tilled, imperceptibly developed into peasants.
178 The state's remaining properties, no longer under cultivation, were invaded by families of small farmers, and the government took no steps to oust them or send them back to privately owned plantations. The estates of individual aristocrats underwent the same fate if not
[625] carefully watched. Theoretically, it was the duty of the army to drive out squatters, to force laborers back into "proper" agricultural work; but the army consisted of peasant youths who would not turn against people of their own group.

671 Legal irregularity was gradually sanctioned by the passage of
178 time, usage being a stronger guarantor of rights than unenforced laws on the statute books.

880 Haitian peasantry, to sum up, began as the unplanned, undesired

unplanned, undesired

Haitian peasantry, to sum up, began as the 175
result of two policies intended to achieve ends quite different; first, 421
presidential gifts of land, the chief purpose of which had been to pay 24
the soldiers of the republic; and second, the crop-sharing system 423
adopted by landlords after the failure of Boyer's Code. 178

6. *The Drawing of Caste Lines (1820-1843)*

Almost every major presidential aim of Boyer came to grief. His 175
tranquil quarter-century rule, the unified island, the financial surplus 178
with which his presidency began, the peace with France after 1825— 565
all these advantages combined with his good intentions did not save his projects from shipwreck. Near the beginning of his régime he announced that, like his revered predecessor Pétion, he felt the safety of Haiti to lie in the abolition of all color distinctions and prejudices. Just as his great Code Rural proved a complete failure, however, so did his efforts to do away with the color line. On the contrary, it was during Boyer's time that class distinctions became fixed, in large part although not wholly, on the basis of color.

Stating that the policy of his government was to put an end, as far 175
as possible, to jealousies of caste, he consistently for a few years 647
promoted a black every time a promotion had been given to a 563
mulatto or other light-skinned person. This procedure soon met an 212
insuperable obstacle. Government posts in general required literacy, 555
and only a very small number of blacks were educated, so that the supply of Negroes was not sufficient to furnish him with candidates. Since one of the few roads to lucrative success lay in official positions, ambitious young colored men sought eagerly for government office, and Boyer soon had no alternative but to advance men of his own
complexion. In the army, on the other hand, literacy was not 175
necessary for promotion. Ambitious Negro youths, therefore, fre- 701
quently chose this career which, while not very profitable in mone- 555
tary rewards, at least gave a man a certain social status and economic 563
security.

Because of the state of education in the republic, consequently, an 175
ugly situation developed, with the civil arm of government almost 647
wholly in control of the colored element and the military force 701
dominated by blacks. Fortunately for the country no crisis developed 701
during the 1820's and 1830's which made an open breach between [563]
army and state.

175 Color prejudice, in so far as a mass of people is concerned, is
563 generally one-sided, directed by the upper group at the lower. The ordinary illiterate worker between 1820 and 1840 was inclined to accept without much question the superiority of the lighter-skinned Haitians. Resentment was often present, and envy, but hardly prejudice. The real contest developed between the colored élite and the blacks of ambition. The latter had reason to feel proud of their rise from slavery; many had shown ability, and felt themselves the mental and moral equals of the mulattoes; the men who had broken the power of the French, ended slavery, and founded the state were Negroes—and now Haiti was being ruled by mulattoes. The contest between the two groups was the obverse side of prejudice. The envied minority, jealously guarding their distinction, were generally conscious of prejudices which they rationalized with pronouncements about superior mentality and innate qualities. They would concede the difference between an educated black and a mere peasant, but would still cling to the feeling that all the culture in the world would not make the educated Negro a peer of the mulatto.

175 Government documents of the period can hardly be expected to
563 call attention to color prejudice and its concomitant resentments. To
114 foreign observers, however, it was immediately apparent and note-
693 worthy as a dominant characteristic of the country. Testimony is
671 unanimous as to its existence; more important, the commentators all agreed that it was growing. An acute Frenchman called Boyer "the slow martyr of his color,"[56] being a mulatto in a republic of blacks: his color made Boyer suspect, so that the President had to spend most of his time and energy trying to avoid conflicts on this issue. It is entirely possible that Boyer's dearest schemes, particularly the enforcement of the Code Rural, failed primarily because the army was controlled by Negroes, whom the President dared not drive too hard; while only the army could have enforced faithful performance by the black laborers. An American doctor stated in 1838 that "the mulattoes, to preserve the sceptre of power in the possession of their caste, are driven to compliances which a negro president would feel himself empowered to spurn from him as the basest infringement on his dignity."[57]

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[56] Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, *Saint-Domingue*, I, 211. This observation is much more to the point than the specious remarks which follow, attributing Boyer's inaction partly to the enervating effects of the tropical climate.

[57] Brown, op. cit., II, 259.

Next to the agricultural system, the state of education in the re- 175
public probably had as much to do as anything with fixing the caste 871
system upon Haiti. So long as the mass of people were not only 563
black but illiterate as well, they would have no means of reaching a 564
social status beyond the one in which they existed. Certainly the aspir-
ing Negroes would not wish to enlighten them, for to stir up the 178
whole people would destroy the very possibility of distinction. As W. S. Gilbert puts it, "When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody." Public education, consequently, hardly advanced a step during Boyer's twenty-five years. It had had a feeble enough beginning under Pétion and remained, as it had been, a prerogative of the well-to-do.[58]

Under the complaisant rule of Boyer, accordingly, the people of color came to regard themselves as the unquestioned élite. Their claim was shared, though not always acknowledged, by a small number of blacks (mostly from the North) who had been anciens libres in colonial Saint-Domingue or noblemen under Christophe; who were literate, or whose wealth and ambition attracted attention. Boyer's boast that "all the feelings and prejudices, either of olden times or of national origin, have been superseded by an intense patriotism" was pure buncombe, as he certainly knew.

If only the best brains of the colored group had been content to 175
serve the government, Haiti might have profited from her situation; 555
but lesser government offices were merely springboards for foreign 662
trade in coffee and mahogany, or for the manipulation of business
deals. Not "intense patriotism," as Boyer liked to think, but financial 661
gain was the motivating force of the élite, as it had been from 171
colonial times. The man who could amass a modest fortune, so that [647]
his children might be educated and their security assured, had done his duty, and he would have been regarded as quixotic to renounce business opportunities for the dubious honor of minor political office. As a consequence of this natural search for gain, the government during Boyer's administration became less and less efficient. Relatives of élite businessmen were given posts because the President could not afford to offend important families. These minor officials then performed their duties awkwardly, or neglected them, in "the unfailing obliquity of dullness."

Skin color became the obsession of high society. Those who had 175
no other merit of which to boast could still revel in their complex- 563
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[58] See chap. XVI.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 ions. Intermarriages between persons of widely different color
563 became extremely rare, being regarded by many lighter Haitians
564 with actual disgust. Everyone with social pretensions wanted to be
whiter. Dr. Brown stated it baldly: "The pure negro seeks to ally
[N] himself to the griffe,[59] the griffe to the mulatto, the mulatto to the quarteroon, the latter to a mustif, and the mustif, having but an untraceable tinge of African blood in his organization, is ostentatiously indignant if he is accused of having any at all."[60] An educated young black of several generations of free parents was scornfully turned down by a lighter-skinned woman considerably his inferior in breeding and wealth because her children would be darker than herself—"*petits enfants griffes*," as she put it. The prejudices of colored people against blacks was almost as great, if not quite as intense, as the former prejudice of whites against colored people in colonial times. No one forgot that there had been black as well as colored freedmen in the colony; but it was much simpler for people of color to claim their long career as *élite* than for blacks to do so.

The attitude of upper-class Haitians toward whites in the midst of all this color prejudice was an interesting mixture. On the one hand, all good Haitians professed to dread a return of the whites; on the other, they welcomed white businessmen in the country. In a certain respect the whites were regarded much as were the Jews of Europe
[673] in the Middle Ages: they were wealthy—and therefore legitimate
objects of pillage, necessary evils for the sake of finance. Theft from a
[671] white man by government action was a service to the state. Laws
[641] were consequently varied from time to time with the sole purpose of
profiting from a foreigner's position. True, the trader might protest
[423] to his home government, but if England or the United States took a
strong stand, Haiti could always retreat; if those governments did not stand firm, Haiti had gained. In the Haitian courts the whites had little show, for Article 38 of the Constitution forbade them to own real estate or to become citizens; they might not even hold a lease for more than ten years; and they might not marry Haitian women.

Nevertheless, the analogy with mediaeval Jews falls down at one vital point: whites were not viewed with contempt. Quite the con-

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[192] [59] A term denoting three parts in four of Negro blood. This term as well as "mustif" goes back to colonial white society; neither was, or is, used by cultivated Haitians.

[60] Brown, op. cit., II, 283–284.

tary; they were grudgingly respected as superior beings, arbiters of 175
the fate of the outside world, potential destroyers of the privileges 563
of the Haitian élite should they return to the country in force. 564
Although white men might not legally marry Haitian women, it
was not every woman who could resist the opportunity of having
children lighter than herself. One indication of the ambiguous atti-
tude toward the whites was seen in religion. In 1842 out of sixty or [793]
seventy Roman Catholic priests in the island, only one was a Haitian.
Many people in the country were well educated, and certainly more
than equals in point of scholarship and *savoir-faire* of the rude priests
imported generally from Corsica. But a feeling was current among
the peasants that "colored baptism will not stick." There is no indi-
cation that the European priests, since they were well paid for their
services, attacked this particular heresy. As for the élite, they derived
a certain satisfaction in being served by white priests. Aside from the
churchmen, however, the only white man in any place of promi-
nence in the country was the mayor of Saint-Marc, whose father had
befriended Boyer in former times.

Few visitors had kind words to say of social conditions in the 114
Haiti of Boyer. As a Frenchman put it: 175

> Democracy was the rule; but what a democracy! A hodge-podge of the 642
> most heterogeneous ideas, an alliance of the most contrary principles, of
> American federalism with military control; the sovereignty of the people
> replaced by the sovereignty of a ruling clique; and finally, all the intellec-
> tual vainglory of a people young, inexperienced, and for a long time
> denied the legitimate manifestation of their own wishes. Added to all these
> inconsistencies is the antagonism of races.[61]

This antagonism was, indeed, paramount. The habitual hauteur and 175
assumed pretensions of the lighter Haitians were a perpetual thorn in 563
the flesh of the ambitious blacks, and thus the breach was everywhere
widened and made permanent. The blacks retaliated against these
distinctions by refusing to obey orders from mulattoes in office, or
by petty outrages against private citizens among the colored group.

The vital lack of the country, assuming that stability is desirable, 175
was a middle class of any sort. On the base of hundreds of thousands 565
of peasants, illiterate, unambitious, indifferent to progress, was built 563

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[61] Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, "La République d'Haïti; ses dernières révolutions; sa
situation actuelle," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, XV, No. 4 (Nov., 1845), pp. 661-662. [113]

3: Leyburn 2-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

175 an ineffective government, momentarily in the hands of colored
563 élite. Attempting to dominate politics was a numerically small group
565 of colored people and a still smaller group of Negroes. Although
[701] prevailingly black, the army might be, and in the later nineteenth
[669] century was continually, used by whichever group offered more. A third power, a middle class, might have balanced these antagonistic factions. Lacking such a moderating influence, Haiti was the victim of recurrent revolutionary movements.

175 At the time of Boyer, actual democracy would have been no safe-
178 guard, for it would have meant the supremacy of ignorance. His rule was the beginning of unfortunate days for Haiti. After the
642 auspicious opening years, the President became an impotent on-
643 looker as his country declined. It is instructive to compare the Haiti of Dessalines and Christophe with the Haiti of 1843, only one generation later.[62]

175 The Haiti of 1806 had been a beehive of activity. Soldiers, fore-
178 men, and policemen then stood over the workers with lianes to force them to labor for the benefit of their state. Production was
642 carefully planned, an ordered hierarchy making every person in the
433 country responsible to another higher than himself until the ruler
466 was reached at the pinnacle. The cardinal fault of any laborer was to shirk at his task. The year 1843, on the contrary, found Haiti in a condition of quiescence which, to those who remembered the old days, resembled torpor. The central government had ceased to drive its citizens, and its half-hearted attempts at persuasion were futile. Overseers, drivers of gangs of workers, soldiers whose duty it was to enforce labor, had disappeared from the scene. Every man was his own master.

175 The standard of living in 1806 as in 1843 was low; but in the earlier
178 year there had been a promise of great things to come once Haiti
511 had rebuilt what war had destroyed. The succeeding years, however, failed to inculcate into the people a desire for any higher standard of life. Country dwellers were benighted; ignorance deepened the habit

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[62] Haiti has never had an accurate census, so that it is impossible even to estimate the total population of the country either in 1806 or in 1843. The figures of 380,000 and 800,000 given by some authors for the two years are mere guesses. Likewise, one can only deduce the proportion of people in the main economic and social categories; probably seventy-five per cent of the Haitians were serfs in 1806 and the same percentage peasants in 1843; the "aristocracy," including all who did not derive a living by manual labor or army service, could hardly have reached five per cent in either year; the army, house servants, day laborers in the towns, and petty businessmen would make up the other twenty per cent.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

of living only for the day by making people content with a low level of physical existence. Haitian peasants were isolated from the rest of the world; and one who has no standard of comparison rarely has the incentive to improve his living conditions.

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Production declined between 1806 and 1843 both in quantity and in quality. Sugar, the staple of colonial trade and still an important export under Christophe, disappeared from the market figures altogether under Boyer. Most of the cane which was raised was worked into syrup and then into tafia (raw rum) for local consumption. Careful attention and the well-ordered machinery necessary for sugar manufacture were both lacking in 1843. Sugar cane was almost never newly planted, but simply lasted on from French days; what plants there were had little attention: they were not manured, or ploughed, or stripped of their dead leaves. Everything was left to nature. The production of coffee in actual number of pounds stood up well, although the quality fell off through lack of cultivation; the price in world markets steadily declined, however, so that the crop of 1843 brought in only twelve million francs as compared with twenty million for the smaller crop of 1822.[63]

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Practically every acre of the fertile soil of Haiti was cultivated in 1806, the methods steadily improving under Christophe. Irrigation projects were then being developed to replace those destroyed in the wars, and a measure of experimentation went on with new crops and fertilizers. In 1843, however, what was called a coffee "plantation" was actually only a large tract of land on which coffee trees grew wild. There was no laying out of the lands nor any improvement of the soil or pruning of the trees to strengthen the parent stem. Until the berries were ready to be picked the coffee tree was rarely touched, except when pigs scratched their backs on it, or goats and donkeys cropped the grass around it. Cotton likewise received little cultivation. Cocoa raising practically ceased altogether, for it required intelligent management.

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Haiti under Dessalines still had many buildings of French con-

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[63] The state figures for 1843 revealed only four money crops, no one of which was so productive of income as sugar had been. In the comparative tables given below it must be remembered that prices declined between 1822 and 1843. [433]

	3-Year Average, *1822–26*	*1843*
Coffee	34,000,000 pounds	33,000,000 pounds
Cotton	678,000 "	2,000,000 "
Campêche	5,600 "	30,000,000 "
Acajou	2,460,000 feet	6,000,000 feet

J: Leyburn E-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

Haiti under Dessalines still had many building

of French con-

175 struction, both plantation mansions and slave quarters. With forced
178 labor available these had been kept in a measure of repair. Christophe,
331 not content with leftovers from colonial days, had sponsored architectural activity all over his kingdom; if his citadel is the most noteworthy example, there are also to his credit lesser palaces and government warehouses. Almost no building was done by Pétion and Boyer, however, and by the 1840's the constructions of the French [*731] had fallen into serious disrepair. Severe earthquakes and fires quickly ruined what time had already weakened. By the middle of the century one saw, instead of trim slave quarters near great mansions, a few straggling towns of one-story houses, the hillsides dotted with ramshackle huts, and the plains with daubed shacks.

175 From great estates to tiny plots; from carefully tilled fields to
178 small gardens in a wilderness; from financial prosperity to debt;
181 from directed enterprise to sloth; from an attitude of hopeful de-
433 termination to one of tolerance for things as they are—these are the striking contrasts of the two periods. It could hardly have been imagined in Christophe's day that the smart, disciplined Dahomets would be succeeded by casual ragamuffins who dozed on their tilted chairs while on sentry duty. Christophe had liked his subjects to be well dressed, and insisted on it; but the British consul in Boyer's time wrote that "the laborers are, generally speaking, nearly naked; in fact, adults only wearing what is barely necessary to prevent indecent exposure, while the children of both sexes run about without covering of any kind."[64]

175 It was the parceling of landed estates combined with the disap-
178 pearance of forced labor which initiated the transition from serfdom
433 to peasantry. Personalities as dynamic as Christophe's or as brutal as
[442] Dessalines' would have been required to keep the people in a servile
[433] condition in a land of tropical fertility. Contemporary foreign judgment was almost unanimous in placing the blame for declining
[441] prosperity upon indolence (the word is continually repeated, gen-
[164] erally preceded by the adjective "natural"). It may be noted in passing that no one at the time seems to have realized how widespread were the debilitating diseases of hookworm and malaria, which can make apparently husky men prefer rest to work. Responsibility for economic failure rests as much upon the governing class,

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64. Charles Mackenzie, *Communications Received at the Foreign Office* [of Great Britain] *Relative to Hayti* (1829), p. 86.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

however, as on the masses. Nothing was done to educate the people and so inculcate in them the desire for a higher standard of living. Where food is easily got, the government gentle, and the people ignorant, one hardly looks for progress.

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Foreigners who knew Haiti were prophesying doom through most of Boyer's administration. The British consul was the most vocal of these prophets. He toured the whole republic in 1828 and found only local variations on a sorry state of affairs. At Jacmel he reported a parceling of the land, a decline of plantations, and a horror of corporal punishment by the people; it seemed to surprise him that every blow given a worker was returned in kind. In the arrondissements of Saint-Marc and Gonaïves cotton continued to be the chief crop as it had been in French days but quantity and quality had declined. At Petite-Rivière relative prosperity prevailed because the lands there were under the control of a former lieutenant of Christophe, who managed to apply that king's stern discipline to his workers. From Gonaïves to Cap Nicolas Môle cultivation was at a low ebb; near Cap-Haïtien everything agricultural was in ruins.[63]

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Industry and discipline, the two commonest characteristics of the Haiti of Christophe, were precisely those most notably absent from the Negro masses of 1843. Obedience had given way to independence of behavior. A visitor in 1842 describes the actual condition of a plantation in the arrondissement of Furcy. Where formerly thirty-two families had toiled industriously, under strict overseers who were free to inflict physical punishment upon laggards, now only twelve families remained, the rest having become freeholders. These twelve had a crop-sharing agreement with the owner of the estate whereby they received the income from half the 2,000 pounds of coffee yielded by the land; but also they

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> appropriate to themselves almost the whole of the provisions which the land furnishes, sending down only a few of the rarer vegetables, beans, peas, and artichokes, to their master, for his table at Port-au-Prince, and supplying his need when he comes to reside for a few days in the country. This he knows very well, but has no alternative but to bear it quietly.[64]

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[63] See particularly ibid., pp. 94, 103–105. The consul clearly felt that the only hope of salvation in Haiti was a reintroduction of some sort of coercion such as that used by Dessalines and Christophe.

[64] Candler, op. cit., p. 144.

IV

CASTE LINES BECOME PERMANENT

175 THE contrast between the golden days of forced labor and the
178 stagnating mediocrity of Boyer's Haiti was as vivid to thinking Haitian aristocrats as it was to foreign whites. Particularly the young "intellectuals" of the 'thirties who knew something of the progress taking place in the rest of the Western World felt that the time had come to stem the wave of economic disintegration at home. In a series of pronouncements they pointed out that the advancement of Haiti had "been constantly slowed up for some time. . . . Haiti is stationary, is retrograde: we need no other proof of it than this frightful uncertainty about the future which so deeply disturbs all serious minds and sincere patriots." One may discount the phrase
175 about "sincere patriots," for peasants were patriots even though
668 undisturbed by the economic stagnation. The agitation for reform won a wide following among all the élite who cherished a glowing recollection of earlier days.

Leaders of the young men called upon Boyer in 1838 to introduce stronger methods of forced labor; but Boyer, remembering the fate of his Code Rural in which he had tried to do precisely this, could think of no effective way of tinkering again with the economic system. From the young men he received the most contradictory advice as to specific methods. The result of the appeal was therefore merely continued inaction by the government. The agitators, ex-
175 cellent critics if poor reformers, accordingly persisted in their cam-
668 paign, adding new converts to their cause until the movement pro-
669 duced a crisis. Revolution broke out in January 1843 at Torbeck in
663 the South, and rapidly spread toward the capital; within two months Boyer and his faithful secretary-general, Inginac, had departed for exile.[1]

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[1] Boyer went first to Jamaica, and then to Paris. In the latter capital King Louis-Philippe gave him an audience and called him "prince." Boyer replied, "Sire, I am no prince. I have merely been the head of a small republic." The King of France thereupon affectionately pressed Boyer's hand, remarking, "When one has governed a million people for twenty-five years, he is raised to the rank of princes." . . . Boyer died in Paris in 1850.

Political history of the next seventy-two years is a complicated 175
story, of which only enough need be told here to illuminate the 643
evolution of caste and social distinctions. Even a short summary
reveals the bewildering confusion. Of the twenty-two heads of state
between 1843 and 1915 only one served out his prescribed term of
office;[a] three died while serving, one was blown up with his palace,
one presumably poisoned, and one hacked to pieces by a mob; one
resigned. The other fourteen were deposed by revolution after
incumbencies ranging in length from three months to twelve years.

The Revolution of 1843 brought back into national prominence
the whole matter of color and caste. The young revolutionaries, 175
mostly light-skinned, seem to have assumed that their group was 669
permanently in control. With cavalier highhandedness they set about
capturing the last stronghold of Negro eminence: the army. They
soon found, however, that they had caught a Tartar; their attempt to
rule was fatal to them and their clique.

In the Constitutional Assembly convened to make a new constitution 175
for the country, they professed astonishingly democratic doctrines.
Proclaiming that the fault of former governments had been 668
reliance upon military power, they now proposed to make civil 646
power paramount by allowing the common people to vote. Since
up to this time the franchise had been strictly limited to army officers 642
and anciens libres, such a radical departure as general suffrage makes 641
no sense unless conceived as an attempt to break the power of the 701
Negro-controlled army, for surely the élite had no confidence in the
wisdom of the peasantry. Weight is given to this explanation by the
paradoxical action of the revolutionaries in promoting to high army
rank some of the strongest mulatto partisans of civil government.

The new constitution was an immediate failure. Most of the 175
colored élite condemned the giving of voting rights to peasants and 642
workers; the army chiefs, generally black and illiterate, some of them
aging veterans of 1803, bitterly resented being made subservient to 641
young, inexperienced civil officers; in fact, even the new mulatto
president, Rivière-Hérard, had no conception of government other
than by military dictatorship.

Not only was the constitution a failure; so was the government of 175
the young revolutionaries. A part of their weakness lay in their 643

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a. The presidential term varied under different constitutions; some allowed a four-year term with the right of reelection, some six years with no reelection.

175 choice of a leader. Not gifted with administrative ability, Hérard
643 blundered first by imprisoning one of the most popular Negro
leaders in the country, thereby turning much of the population of
the South against him. Next, learning of conspiracies in the Spanish
[669] end of the island, he tried to stamp out revolt by exile and jail sentences, only to precipitate there a real revolution for independence. In his fight against the Dominican separatists he was roundly defeated, and his prestige sank rapidly to the vanishing point. Within two months after his inauguration, he had only one third of the island left over which to attempt to rule. Within a year he was out of power altogether and with him the colored people.

175 The Revolution of 1844, although supported by certain old friends
669 of Boyer, was chiefly a movement of Negroes—followers of the
imprisoned black, Salomon; peasants from the South who had been promised much by the previous year's revolutionaries and had got nothing; and particularly the Negro army clique. The significant part of the new revolution was its announced purpose, to lessen the influence of the colored group in government, to have a black president, and to dispossess certain reputedly well-to-do citizens by
[643] dividing their estates among the people. Quickly successful, the insurgents promoted to the presidency the illiterate octogenarian black general, Guerrier, who in Christophe's kingdom had been Duke of Marmalade[3] and Duke of Avancé.

175 For the first time in a quarter-century the Negro element was
again in the saddle, where it was to remain for the next fifteen years.
643 Everyone recognized Guerrier's personal courage and admired the
662 common sense which made him prefer conciliation to unnecessary violence as a method of government, but the colored people were shocked at having to live under the rule of another black ex-slave. The idea evoked grim memories. Knowing Guerrier's addiction to drink, the colored faction managed to make him a tool for their own use, so that his brief administration, ending with his death in 1845, was generally known as a "government of understudies." Guerrier was followed in the presidency by another black, likewise an octo-
175 genarian: Louis Pierrot, the handsome brother-in-law of King
643 Christophe. But Pierrot was even more ignorant than Guerrier and

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[554] [3] This title generally evokes amusement among non-Haitians. Christophe had merely named his peers after districts whose names had been given by French planters in the eighteenth century. Another of his noblemen was a Count of Limonade.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

already showed signs of senile dementia; his tyrannical crotchets speedily raised up a revolt against him, and in 1846 he gave way to still another black, General Riché. Like his two predecessors, Riché was aged and illiterate. Nevertheless, he began his rule auspiciously by putting an end to dictatorship and surrounding himself with wise counselors. In 1847, just when the country was beginning to appreciate his good qualities, he died a victim of drugs taken to increase his vigor. 175 643

These four presidents, who had among them ruled less than four years, did not appreciably alter the social situation, for they had all been preoccupied with the suppression of revolutions. But Haiti was still in a position to take some definite step toward economic progress, education of the people, conciliation of the antagonistic colored and black elements. Because of a stupid whim, the country was precipitated down exactly the opposite path. The Senate gathered to select Riché's successor found itself unable to rally a majority vote for any candidate; whereupon one Senator proposed the name of an ignorant, entirely unillustrious, black general, Faustin Soulouque. The chamber immediately gave him a majority, for the supporters of each candidate saw in this complete nonentity a chance for another "government by understudies," in which they themselves would actually rule. When the Senatorial delegation arrived to inform Soulouque of his election, that unimpressive Negro, lying stretched out in his hammock, refused at first to take it seriously. He had more than once been the victim of practical jokes, and this looked like a particularly malicious one.[4] It took persuasion to convince him that he was indeed the new president of Haiti.

Soulouque's accession to power marked the beginning of a twelve-year nightmare for Haiti. During his first year of office the new president walked warily over the unfamiliar terrain. Those who had named him for their own ends felt justified in their scheme, for each opposing group still looked forward to controlling the government with Soulouque as a front. Meanwhile, however, the President had been carefully observing everything that went on around him, arriving at his own judgment of men and measures.

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[4] Many years before, Boyer had prophesied a period of disorder in Haiti and is reported to have said that in such a time "any man in Haiti might become president, even that stupid Negro over there," indicating Soulouque. It is told that Soulouque mumbled, "Please, Mr. President, don't make a fool of me." [159]

175 Suddenly, without warning, he reversed what had been mistaken for
643 docile inactivity, and assumed complete personal command of the
reins of office. By means of a well-organized body of secret police,
[625] he inspired his own counselors with fear not only for their positions
but for their lives. Although illiterate, Soulouque never signed a
bill presented to him by his ministers until he was sure he knew its
essential core. The hopeful "understudies" were forcibly awakened
to the realization that they were hoist on their own petard.

175 The colored element was particularly apprehensive at Soulouque's
amazing activity, for the President was clearly setting himself against
643 their group, both in the cabinet and out. Determining clandestinely
563 to get rid of their puppet before he became a Frankenstein's monster
669 to destroy his creators, they fomented a new revolution. This, however, proved to be a strategic error of the first magnitude, for the President was already much stronger than they imagined. The insurrection was quashed with massacre and attendant frightfulness. In the aftermath, as Bouzon mordantly remarks, "the republic was calm—with all the tranquillity of a tomb!" By their ineptitude, the colored group had now made themselves completely insecure.

175 In the second year of his régime Soulouque decided to imitate
565 Dessalines by turning the state into an empire. His coronation was
643 extremely gaudy, as well as expensive. Calling himself Emperor
Faustin I, he created a peerage drawn chiefly from among his black
642 generals—four princes, fifty-nine dukes, and numerous counts,
[555] barons, and knights. This was merely outward pomp to gratify their craving for prestige, for they had no functions to perform, nor even the necessity of Christophe's peers to pay for their regalia. As nobles they were given no responsibilities in directing economic activity nor any increased political power over districts of the empire. The Emperor's own vanity was flattered by having a peerage. He ruled
175 as an autocrat with blatant despotism. For ten years following the
643 coronation Haiti had to accustom itself to costly expeditions against
721 the Dominican Republic, nearly all ending in defeat for Haiti. The
outcome of these intermittent wars was neither gain nor loss of
648 territory by either side, but only temporary rule of occupied districts.
728 Haiti likewise had to accustom itself to sudden executions, to the shabby grandeur of court display, and to financial trickery which would not have deceived a schoolboy. While the heads of his opponents and even his loyal counselors fell, Soulouque's infantile
"empire" tottered to economic ruin.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

"empire" tottered to economic ruin. Graft, default on the debt, 175
increasing deficits, and debased currency were the order of the day, 643
and so continued until 1859, when the accumulation of anger over 652
the useless wars and the humiliating defeats made the Emperor so
unpopular that a new and more carefully planned revolution accomplished 669
his downfall.

Fifteen years of administration by Negro rulers had broken the 175
political power of the colored élite. Only three light-skinned men 643
became president thereafter until the occupation of Haiti by the
American Marines in 1915; in the seventy-two years following 178
Boyer's downfall, mulattoes ruled during only eight. The army 564
under a black general was too powerful, a colored president too hampered by suspicion, to make the political game worth the candle. The colored élite, therefore, adapted themselves to existing conditions as best they could, controlling the business life of Haiti, filling the law offices and, because of their literacy, the secretaryships of state, and indulging in honorific cultural pursuits.

In the years after Soulouque the basic realities of Haitian life were 175
changed hardly at all by shifting political administrations. Some of the 643
presidents were mildly progressive, many were indifferent; still more 66
were actually harmful; but the lives of the mass of peasants were not often touched by presidential vagaries. Politics was an affair almost wholly of townspeople, of the army, the élite, and the pseudo-élite. Revolutions, counterrevolutions, movements of reform, international tangles, financial woes, and most of the other complications to which unstable states are heir, absorbed the attention of rulers and upper-class folk who were politically inclined.

Constitutions were made by presidents and changed by their successors; 175
the Senate passed contradictory laws in the same session if 642
the chief executive so recommended; the courts were presided over 671
by the president's men. Haitian law in the latter half of the nineteenth
century was what the president's immediate strength and wish made 692
it—or else it was folk custom, undisturbed by the rulers.

Never once, in the three quarters of a century after Boyer's time, 175
did Haiti approach the high standard of production known in 178
colonial days or in the early years of independence. The pattern of
Haitian social and economic life became fixed in this seventy-five 433
years. Haiti became a country of small-scale tillage by a peasant 565
population, with only enough external trade to provide moderate 439

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178 fortunes, that is, a few thousands of dollars, for a small number of
élite, and to make the presidency a position economically rewarding
365 enough to justify revolutionary conspiracies. The growth of a
433 peasantry set in train during the long régime of Boyer continued,
439 unbroken even by the numerous insurrections, until fixed in the
mores. Land owned by the countryfolk was divided and redivided
[423] among their heirs, so that even holdings of moderate size became
[428] smaller.

Not one of the twenty-two rulers following Boyer made the
175 slightest effort to return the country to the forced labor system of
643 Dessalines and Christophe. They seemed to recognize the inevita-
566 bility of a peasant way of life, or at least the impossibility of luring
423 the people back to directed labor after a long experience of freedom.
On the contrary, several presidents still further parceled the land.

President Guerrier, for example, the very year after Boyer was
175 deposed, put on sale at moderate prices those state lands in the North
643 not reserved for public use.[5] If the revolutionaries of 1843 had hoped
423 to bring back Christophe's system of forced labor, their hopes were
doomed to disappointment because of the state's need of immediate income. Christophe's state land areas were now broken up in the one part of the country where a few large plantations still existed.

President Geffrard in 1862 gave his blessing to small ownership, the
175 basis of peasantry. Whereas Pétion's laws had prohibited sales of land
643 in parcels less than fifteen acres, Geffrard's law regularized the leasing
421 and sale of national property in lots of fifteen acres *at most*. Geffrard
423 was the first president openly to admit that many government lands
had been lost to citizens by squatting. In an endeavor to give legality to land held by squatters' rights, his law demanded that squatters register their claims, announcing that within a short time there would be no further dismemberment of the national patrimony except by grants and sales.[6] Few registrations were made, however, for the Haitian peasant had already acquired a suspicion of legal documents he could not read or understand, and he could see no reason for legalizing a status in which, with the squatter's tenacity and inertia, he already felt himself secure.

000 Haiti was in constant financial straits. Money had to be borrowed

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[5] By a law of September 23, 1844.

[6] Law of August 14, 1862. The articles cited here are 2 and 4.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Haiti was in constant financial straits. Money had to be borrowed

abroad; then paid back at the promised time or a foreign warship 175
would appear at some Haitian port. The steady drain of annual 652
indemnity payments to France,[7] the cost of subduing revolutionary movements, and the large sum eaten up even in times of peace by wages to the army made successive presidents continue to yield government land for small sums of ready cash, in spite of Geffrard's announcement that no more state lands would be alienated. Nissage Saget, coming to power by a successful revolution, paid out fifteen
acres to each soldier who fought in his campaign in the South.[8] The [171]
straits of the government resembled those of the Continental Congress in America during the Revolution.

Another impulse to parcel the land came during the administration 175
of President Lysius Salomon (1879–88). The debt to France had 643
finally, after half a century, been paid off; that incubus removed, 671
Salomon instituted numerous reforms, financial, military, educa- 423
tional. On February 26, 1883, he signed a law by which every citizen [648]
of Haiti might conceivably become a landowner even if he lacked money to buy land. Upon receipt of a written agreement to cultivate certain tropical crops—specifically, sugar, coffee, cotton, cacao, and tobacco—the government would grant provisional title to a portion of fifteen to twenty-five acres of land taken from the public domain. The grant became final if, after a period of from two to five years, three quarters of the land had been effectively cultivated.

Five hundred requests were made in 1884 for such grants, and twelve hundred in the following year.[9] Thereafter one finds no records of applications for land; the peasants had discovered the hidden trap in this apparent generosity. How could a peasant with a tiny farm lacking implements and tools, not to mention ready cash, be expected to cultivate important crops on fifteen or twenty acres of land? He would have to cut down trees, uproot wild plants, fertilize the ground, purchase equipment and seeds, and then wait several years for a crop. As Thoby says, "And even then he was not a

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[7] See above, pp. 70–71.

[8] Law of July 12, 1870. In August of the same year, Nissage required an inventory to be taken of state lands remaini[illegible]

[9] J.-C. Dorsainvil, *Manuel d'[illegible]oire d'Haïti* (Port-au-Prince, 1934), p. 317, cites [114]
these figures. They are contested by Dr. F. Dalencour, *Le Sauvetage national par le* [423]
retour à la terre, p. 31, who maintains that only 800 applications came in altogether. Here, as elsewhere, Haitian records are incomplete.

175 proprietor in the true sense of the word, for he might not change his
643 crops and cultivate bananas, potatoes, yams, peas, or other food-
671 stuffs."[10] Critics of Salomon point out that these conditional grants
were designed to make of the peasant a simple fiscal workman for
423 the state, to force him once more to labor for the public rather than
for himself. The legislators of 1883 were preoccupied not with the
welfare of the peasant, but solely with the increase of production
and of fiscal revenue.

The law of 1883, then, like the Code Rural of 1826, fell into desuetude. The peasant was canny enough to see that passing a law did not change realities: he might still squat on government land and yet not be thrown off by the government. Both Boyer's Code and Salomon's law, although of entirely different inspiration, tried to regiment the Haitian peasant in agricultural lines beneficial to state finances but uncongenial to himself.

175 Up to the time of the American Occupation of 1915, there were
no other measures of much influence upon the status of the peasant.
423 The whole impulse of the common people seemed to be toward the
acquisition of plots of land for themselves. By the indifference or impotence of the state, they were allowed to install themselves upon government lands, there to found families and pass on the property upon which they had settled. Thus occurred what might be called a "natural"—certainly unplanned and automatic—development of small property. At first it came at the expense of the great domains; next, through allowing state leases to expire and be given cheaply into the hands of small farmers; finally there were the grants and sales at low prices to thousands of soldiers.

Time validated the peasants' claims, but the state has never formally done so. Legally it might be argued that only a small fraction of the population of Haiti has an indisputable right to the land on which it lives. By strict interpretation most of the peasants are still squatters whom the government might dispossess. The American Occupation, in view of this confusion, tried in businesslike fashion to survey the land and establish property rights. The task proved so extremely difficult that it was soon given up. It met with the stubborn refusal of the peasants to state their claims or take any interest in legalizing their rights. No administration has been foolhardy enough

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[10] Armand Thoby, *La Question agraire en Haïti*, p. 45.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

to attempt to retrace the path of property evolution, which has 175 steadily taken its own course since the time of Pétion." 423

With the peasants prevailingly satisfied in their daily round of life, 565 the separation of upper and lower castes in Haitian society has gradually become an accepted fact. At least ninety per cent of the [162] total population now belong to the peasant group, whose members are as much reconciled to their status as in the United States the poorest colored folk to theirs. Vaguely they may often wish they had the privileges and luxuries of those above them; often, likewise, they feel resentment at the way in which they are treated; but in so far as it is permissible to generalize about two million people, it is fair to say that the Haitian peasant rarely complains of his lot.

Of the remaining ten per cent of the population a small fraction [178] look upon themselves as élite. Some families of this group can be traced back to colonial times when their ancestors were already affranchis; others began to take on aristocracy under Dessalines, Christophe, Pétion, and Boyer. Those whose forebears have become élite only since 1843 are less firmly entrenched in the topmost class. However, since no president since Boyer has ever succeeded in weakening caste lines, the élite one or two per cent may be said to constitute a stable social group.

It is significant that although the blacks had the government in their hands for three quarters of a century they were unable to effect any slight change either in caste membership or in caste lines.

The part of the population which is neither élite nor peasant is not 565 "middle class," as that term is understood in the Western World. It 369 is rather a shifting percentage of Haitians whose one prevailing characteristic is their residence in towns. Some are wage earners, some small tradesmen; some are ex-élite on the way down the

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11. The intimate observer of the Haitian peasant never fails to comment upon his [181] love of the land. Whereas the colonial planter attached a value to his estate because it [421] produced wealth, the peasant loves his little plot because it is his home. Through all the sixteen successive constitutions of Haiti, the one unchangeable article has been the [425] prohibition of sale to foreigners of real estate in the country. Haitian land is for Haitian [423] people—or was so until after the American Occupation. Likewise, the peasant is suspicious of any law which seems likely to reintroduce the system of large properties, for these might condemn him to leave his land and work at wages for the benefit of a master who, whether kindly or pitiless, would still deprive him of his present liberty. Therefore the Haitian countryman defends with all his force this soil to which his [24] liberty attaches him, and which he cultivates after his own manner. "The Haitian loves his land almost as a man loves his woman."

565 social ladder, while others are ex-peasants on the way up. Acceptance
569 by the élite entails requirements severe enough to discourage many
aspirants; at the same time, the heavens can be stormed by those
[55] willing to endure the heat and strain of battle. Lacking descent from
former affranchis, the only means by which the ambitious may
achieve entrance into the élite caste is by money, education, sustained
social show and leisure, "proper" marriage, and separation from
lower caste friends; and one generation rarely suffices to win acceptance by the élite.

565 The townspeople rarely attempt to break down the caste barrier. Servants, day laborers, delivery clerks, menials in general, they consider themselves one step removed from the peasants, and they know their place in the social hierarchy. By the scrupulous observances of the élite, by the casual acceptance of their status by the peasants, even by the very effort of the ambitious to improve their lot, the caste system is constantly reaffirmed and fulfilled.

V

CASTES SINCE THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION OF 1915

IN 1915 American Marines entered Haiti. One of the major 175
reasons for their intervention may have been economic; 648
certainly this explanation or accusation has been frequently made by
opponents of American dollar diplomacy. Nevertheless, the ground 642
was well prepared by political incompetency in Haiti in the years
preceding 1915, and the reason given to the world by American
statesmen to justify the Occupation was essentially a political one:
Haiti was in a state of anarchy.

As has been abundantly shown, Haiti never had a semblance of 175
democracy. From its beginning the country was governed either by 642
a despot—the president, who might or might not be benevolent—or
by an oligarchy. The failure of Haitian politics from 1843 onward
was the inability of the titular ruler and the oligarchy to work in
harmony; indeed, the oligarchy was continually divided against
itself. Only three of Haiti's presidents from 1843 to 1915 were more
than mediocre statesmen.[1] It is merely a question of degree, whether
such phrases as "political and economic stagnation" and "social
inertia" are more accurately descriptive than words like decay and
degeneration.

A brief résumé of politics between 1900 and 1915 will set the stage 175
for a view of the Occupation in relation to the development of caste. 643

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[1] With this judgment by a foreigner Haitians may obviously disagree. In the 642
author's opinion the presidents Geffrard (1859–67), Salomon (1879–88), and Hyppo-
lite (1889–96) were relatively distinguished men. To Geffrard may be credited the 175
following: increase of educational facilities; construction of much-needed public 643
works; an attempt to form a true middle class, even by importing Negroes from the
United States; reduction of the size of the army by half; healing of a sixty-year breach 65
with the Holy See, so that Haiti might once again have approved priests; the opening
of closed ports to commerce; and improvement of agricultural methods. Salomon
was an educated man with European experience; his achievements were to create a
national bank, establish a sound currency, retire the public debt, lower tariffs, bring in
schoolteachers from France, open rural schools, bring Haiti into the International
Postal Union. Hyppolite's chief triumphs were in the field of public works—much-
needed buildings, bridges, docks, telephone and telegraph lines.

175 643 642 The twentieth century began inauspiciously with a succession of dull incompetents in the presidency. General Sam's administration (1896–1902) had been distinguished only by lethargic calm. Nord Alexis (1902–8), over eighty when elected, prolonged the peace by doing nothing to disturb it; he solved his financial problems by issuing paper money, while his political "policy" involved nothing more significant than the sponsoring of festivals to celebrate Haiti's hundred years of independence. The mild revolution which displaced him substituted a president more puerile than oppressive, Antoine Simon (1908–11), who is best revealed in a terse comment by a Haitian author: "When he passed by on a street or through a public square, everyone, foreigners as well as Haitians, must stand still, even stop smoking, and respectfully salute the Head of State. At any instant, without reason, the functionaries of the capital might be called to the Palace to endure his interminable and insipid discourses."[2] A revolution cut short his tedious régime.

Within the next four years six presidents rose and fell. Their administrations were worse than ephemeral; indeed, they hardly deserve the name of governments. Not one of the six had a happy time in office; the first was blown up with his palace, the second is generally thought to have been poisoned, the next three were quickly deposed by revolutions, and the last, after massacring his imprisoned political enemies, was horribly cut into small bits by an infuriated mob. Anarchy then ensued.

175 652 648 For years Haitian presidents had staved off financial collapse by heavy borrowing abroad. United States financial interests were involved in the Bank of Haiti and in a railroad company, while the American government, through its Monroe Doctrine, was disturbed by French and German threats to collect their Haitian debts by force. When President Guillaume Sam[3] was hacked to pieces by the mob, the United States landed Marines from gunboats which were conveniently just outside the harbor of Port-au-Prince. Beginning on July 28, 1915, the Occupation lasted for nineteen years.

128 645 With the question of America's justification in the matter of occupying Haiti this book cannot pretend to deal. As with most large matters of policy, convincing arguments can be offered on both sides. The important fact for this study is that the presence of white

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[2] J.-C. Dorsainvil, *Manuel d'histoire d'Haïti*, p. 338.

[3] Not to be confused with Simon Sam, who had ruled twenty years earlier.

American Marines in Haiti during the next two decades had definite effects upon the social life of the country. 128 648

One of the most immediately observable results was the termination of the long political domination by the blacks, and reëstablishment of the colored élite in government control. The four presidents since 1915, Dartiguenave (1915–22), Borno (1922–30), Roy (1930), and Vincent (1930–41), have all been light-skinned. The United States forces had a definite hand in the election of the first two of these men. America's concern was certainly not to return the government to the colored group, but rather to have as titular heads of state men who were educated, temperate of mind, civil in manners—and, of course, mentally "supple" enough to carry out policies agreeable to the State Department at Washington. Since education had for long been a perquisite of the élite only, and since colored élite outnumbered black élite, the chances were good that the choice should fall upon a colored man in 1915 and 1922. Even so, it may have been pure coincidence that the Americans supported mulattoes rather than Negroes; it can hardly be coincidence that the mulatto presidents since 1915 have filled the key offices with colored men. They would assuredly maintain that they had tried to select persons best fitted for office. The fact remains that there are few blacks in the important ministries. 175 648 643 563

This return to political power of the colored element was one of the most sweeping transformations effected by the Marines, for once again, as in the golden days of Pétion and Boyer, political prestige accompanied and fortified social position. Since 1843 one black or almost black general had succeeded another as president of the republic, and the élite class had perforce to endure them. Socially tolerated these parvenu generals had been, but accepted never. When the Marines arranged the election of President Dartiguenave they effectively reversed the tradition of a century. Since 1915 there have been several Negro candidates for the presidency; in coming elections there are sure to be others; for the present and the near future it is safe to say there will be no more black non-élite presidents.

Such a prophecy is made with a certain assurance because of another result of the Occupation: reform of the army. All true friends of Haiti knew, as most Haitian statesmen had understood for a hundred years, that the huge standing army was an unmitigated burden to the economic, political, and social stability of the country. 175 701 648 177

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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701 Since it was an entrenched interest, however, no responsible statesman
648 had dared to threaten its hold. The Marines swept it out of
177 existence, undertaking to substitute for it a trained constabulary of
625 only 2,000 men who should combine routine military tasks with
652 police duty in the scattered towns. Results were immediately apparent:
669 the weighty incubus of soldiers' wages was lifted from the treasury; thousands of men were deprived of sinecures and put back into productive economic activities; the constant threat of armed revolution was removed; better order was kept by 2,000 trained men in trim uniform than by twelve times that number of ragged loafers who called themselves soldiers; and since the army was no longer the great steppingstone to political office, the élite felt more secure from assault by ambitious but uneducated army men. From 1843 to 1915 the élite had endured many lower-caste presidents because these were able to control the army; now the army had disappeared.

175 The Marines did much that was of indisputable benefit to Haiti.
648 This was acknowledged even by the most vocal patriots who soon
[743] began to campaign for an end of the Occupation. Where there had been no real work in public health, Americans now built hospitals,
[744] established clinics, cleaned up the sources of many diseases, laid down sewage systems, gave the towns pure water. In 1915 there were only
[365] three automobiles in the country, and no roads for them to travel; the Americans built many miles of paved roads. In 1915 there had
[491] been only one wharf, two short stretches of railroad, two lighthouses,
[45] one electric plant; the Americans undertook electrification, telephone systems, the construction of administration buildings, and other public conveniences. Whether in such visible matters or in the obscurer realms of currency, banking, and budgets hardly a phase of daily life was left untouched. And judged by the standards of civilization the Marines improved what they touched.

175 But rancor against the Americans began early and continued to
648 the bitter end in 1934. The pride of all Haitians was deeply wounded
642 by the Occupation. For 111 years they had governed themselves and had assumed themselves to be a sovereign nation; the Marines patroling the countryside were vivid reminders that Haiti had never been independent except by sufferance, and that white men were once more overseeing the destinies of colored and Negro men. Nevertheless, the reasons proclaimed for opposing the Occupation were not those of hurt vanity. Some of those given were entirely

plausible, such as the race prejudice displayed by many individual 175
Marines;[4] the unnecessary slaughter in the suppression of *caco* (guer- 648
rilla) rebellions in the North; the continued holding of offices (and 642
salaries) by Americans too impatient to train Haitians, as by the
Agreement of 1915 they were supposed to do; the fostering rather
than elimination of military psychology among the people by the
presence of armed Marines.

The campaign against the Occupation was generally on the highest 175
level of patriotism, for it threw out one variation after another on 648
the same theme: We Haitians are not being allowed to govern 642
ourselves. Some realists knew that their hurt national pride was 668
accompanied by disappointment that certain salaries were not reach-
ing Haitian pockets, certain prestige of office not redounding to the
credit of Haitian men. What if the real reason for opposition were
not the openly avowed one? The Marines must go! Order had been
restored and government reëstablished. It was patent that any ad-
ministration which could effect the withdrawal would be immensely
popular: it was equally patent that if the Americans left the country,
the benefits of their efficiency and material improvement would
remain as a tangible boon to Haiti.

President Sténio Vincent, elected in 1930 after a campaign in 175
which the Americans did not interfere, began the negotiations with 648
Washington. With President Hoover he made headway toward 642
reforms, but President Roosevelt's attitude was more actively co-
operative. In 1934 Vincent had a series of conferences with the
President of the United States; the latter, in pursuit of his good-
neighbor policy, persuaded the American Senate to order the Occu-
pation at an end and turn over without cost to Haiti many buildings,
supplies, and equipment used by the Marines. Vincent personally [643]
benefited from the withdrawal of 1934. He called himself Haiti's [154]
"second Liberator,"[5] and made the anniversary of the American [527]
departure a national holiday. Indirectly the élite also benefited for [563]
now, entrenched in office, they could govern without white super-
vision. The material equipment was there to be enjoyed by the
whole people at no further expense to them.

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[4] The United States government in the early days had sent Marines from the Southern States to Haiti, on the theory that they would, from long acquaintance with Negroes, know how to "handle" them. This stupid blunder was shortly rectified.

[5] Dessalines had, of course, been the first.

175 The Occupation had had other far-reaching consequences. It had
648 removed from the Constitution an article which had endured from
642 the very first—the prohibition against ownership of land by white
423 people. Americans argued that since Haiti's greatest potential source
of wealth was agricultural (sugar and coffee in particular), new
563 methods were needed if rehabilitation were to occur. Only foreign
whites had both the necessary wealth and the requisite agricultural knowledge: therefore, whites must be attracted into the country by an opportunity to establish plantations. Although the Senate of Haiti protested violently against this reversal of tradition, which struck at the people's long pride in their complete ownership of the land, the Americans yielded only on the point of requiring five years' residence of the white landlord in the country. The influx of foreign whites has not been large, but in the Plaine du Nord and Port-au-Prince the white "colonies" are considerably larger now than in 1914.

175 Up to the present moment the white element in Haiti has not
648 exerted any noticeable pressure on the government. Its mere pres-
ence, however, is bound to be a restraining influence on politicians,
563 for most of the whites are Americans, and the government at
Washington may not always follow a good-neighbor policy. With the clannishness so usual in white colonists living among darker people, the Americans in Haiti have their private clubs and their closed social set. For the first time since 1804 the élite are socially not the highest-ranking persons in the country.

175 The physical presence of several hundred white Marines for nine-
teen years had also one unplanned but inevitable result: an increase in
648 the amount of white blood in the population. For many decades
563 numerous élite had rested comfortably beneath their light skins,
144 knowing that only they, with their greater mobility in the world,
had any real chance to sustain a white strain. The Occupation, however, brought white men in contact with black women; there was a steady average of 2,000 white Marines in the country for two
[554] decades. The light skin of resulting offspring suggested to many the
possibility of a climb up the social ladder now that the most difficult rung had already been achieved. No figures are available on the number of children born in Haiti between 1915 and 1934 of white fathers, but it was a perceptible influx in the lower class.

175 Haitian businessmen enjoyed a greater economic prosperity during
458 the Occupation than they had ever known before. It is commonly

reported in Haiti that although they joined patriotically in the cheering 175
when the Marines embarked in 1934, many of them shed tears to 458
see the departure of 2,000 monthly salaries, most of which had been enriching the local tills. Indeed, the country came much closer to establishing a mercantile middle class during the Occupation than
ever before. The only real control left behind by the Americans was [648]
an overseer of the national budget, destined to leave as soon as Haiti's
external debt was finally paid off. To that end the government saved [652]
rather than spent, so that businessmen found no comfort in the state of economic affairs, particularly during a decade of world depression and European disturbance. Nationalist economic theories in Europe have upset Haitian markets, so that the élite thriftily save their pennies against hard times instead of spending them freely on present luxuries. The American overseer of the budget withdrew in 1941.

At many points the forces of the Occupation touched unwittingly 175
upon deep-rooted prejudices of the Haitian people. In order to 648
secure laborers for road construction the Marines revived an old
corvée law of Christophe's time, requiring forced labor on public 466
works at the need of the government. Many of the ill-nourished 669
peasants were taxed beyond their physical powers by work on the 653
roads, so that an armed revolt by caco guerrillas broke out. Its suppression required months of time and cost many lives, leaving in its train a great deal of ill will.

The efficient Americans also came to grief when they attempted to 175
make Haitians orderly in the American way. Land titles were in 648
chaos, as we have noted. American experts wished to find a basis for
internal taxation, so that economic reform might be effective and 423
permanent. The effort to have people declare their claims so that these might be properly registered had to be given up after a few weeks, for the peasant owners knew without written deeds their local boundaries, and among the squatters those who realized their title might not stand under strict investigation were understandably averse to having questions of property tenure raised by the authorities of an alien and interfering government.

Wherever Marine barracks were located, there were centres of a 175
cultural dissemination which was bound in the long run to affect 648
Haitian ideas and practices. Automobiles, radios, amusements, even
the daily conversation of the Marines, all left their mark upon a 177
people who had been effectively isolated from the world for more than a century.

175 178 565 829 However, as regards caste itself we can now see that after a hundred years practically nothing has changed, even through the Occupation. In the essential structure of the Haitian social system there is still a twofold division. In the mind of élite persons the peasant exists only as a very necessary but essentially stupid part of the country's economic life. The casual visitor who, after two weeks in Port-au-Prince and its environs, has met a few distinguished Haitians, has already sensed the barriers of caste which exist between élite and the lower orders. If the sojourner remains longer and is accepted into the drawing rooms of the élite, he will hear exciting and brilliant discussions of such questions as whether Haitian civilization has in it anything of the African,[6] whether it might not be wise for Haiti to throw over both French and Créole and adopt a new language, and whether the people of the North are not superior to those of the South;[7] however, no self-satisfied member of the élite, in an expan-

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[114] [829] [6] See, for example, the article by Lorimer Denis and Dr. François Duvalier, "La Civilisation haïtienne: notre mentalité est-elle africaine ou gallo-latine?" in *Revue de la Société d'Histoire et de Géographie d'Haïti*, VII, No. 23 (May, 1936), pp. 1–31. Anthony Froude, in his *English in the West Indies* (New York, 1888), tells of an American consul asking a Haitian why the island was not cultivated more intensely. "The dusky soldier laid his hand upon his breast and waved his hand. 'Ah!' he said, 'that might do for English or Germans or Franks; we of the Latin race have higher things to occupy us!'"

[114] [829] [7] This last sentiment was noted by Sir Spenser St. John (*Hayti, or the Black Republic* [London, 1889], p. 14), who calls it a popular idea at the time he wrote and for years before, the élite of the North explaining it by the tradition of industry instilled during Christophe's reign. But Moreau de Saint-Méry had already pointed out that in colonial times there was greater fertility, more abundant rain, more intelligence in management of plantations, more slaves, more distinction and polish among the masters, in the North than in the South. Auguste Magloire (in *L'Erreur révolutionnaire et notre état social*, p. 263) thinks the North infinitely superior to the South; it did not participate in the violence of political change in the early days, yet when it did intervene it took the lead. He stated however that the North seemed to be losing its social superiority, and certainly its economic superiority, because of its cultural subordination to France: this made French ideas prevail, and one of the chief French ideas is that political power is supremely important; the North consequently came to seek political superiority when it should have preserved cultural and social preëminence. Paultre Sannon, on the other hand (*Essai historique sur la Révolution de 1843* [Aux Cayes, 1905], pp. 5–9), regards the South as considerably more advanced intellectually. It has never, he says, been able to submit to the absolutist yoke of government, not because of the French influence, for the South was least developed under the colonial régime, but because of its geographical situation, with its long broken coast line, its ports, cities, tribunals, customs-houses, schools, and the like. Those who have outside connections are always more open minded and progressive, he says, than inhabitants of the interior. There is no important town in the South which is not on the sea. Nowhere were the affranchis more numerous or richer than in the South, and these men led the revolution. (See Beaubrun Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti* [Port-au-Prince, 1853–60], I, 97.) All these influences made for a democratic spirit, but also for one of agitation.

sive mood, will speak of the peasant and his contributions to Haiti; 175
he thinks only in terms of his own caste.[8] Upper-class Haitians dread 170
the sight of tourists taking pictures of native scenes, fearing that the 565
travelers will return to their own country and label these pictures, 829
"Typical Haitian Scenes," when, as anyone should know, typical
Haiti is upper-class Haiti.[9]

The American Occupation failed of many of its ends because it did 175
not recognize the social situation and its implications; or, realizing 648
them, did not consider them worthy of attention. Roads, telephones, 177
mail service, and improved agricultural methods seemed patently
desirable to progressive Americans; to install them for the Haitians
seemed generously wise. Yet many well-meant efforts came to grief,
for the mass of people, lacking a tradition of orderly free government, did not always understand what the Americans were about,
while the élite saw in the activities of the Marines a threat to their
own dominance as rulers of the country.[10]

The antiquated, but prevalent, notion of the superior mentality of 563
the white race also flourishes in certain quarters among the élite. 829
Many of them say that the Negro can never originate a civilization,
and that with the best of education he remains an inferior man,
utterly unfitted for government, utterly incapable of making progress.

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[8] Witness Marthe Oulié's paragraph (*Les Antilles, filles de France* [Paris, 1935], [114]
p. 254): "My amiable host (a member of the élite) was triumphant at my surprise and [829]
enchantment. 'You did not expect to find a civilized country. What have the spiteful wits told you? That the Haitians worshipped serpents and made human sacrifices? True, the peasants on the mountain-sides are still very primitive and ignorant, but in the cities you will find many families like ours, cultivated in letters and music, careful and proud of their French culture, and absolutely set against American de-civilization.'"

[9] "Should you like a European to take pictures of the slums of your American cities and of the most degraded of your share-croppers, and then circulate these photographs as typical American scenes?" asked one sensitive Haitian.

[10] See the *Report of the Forbes Commission to Haiti*, 1930, pp. 18–19. "Illiteracy keeps [114]
the peasant masses politically inarticulate, except in case of mobs or bandit gangs, [648]
which formerly infested the countryside and often furnished the forces of revolution. These bandit gangs have been broken up and have disappeared under American rule, but the social forces that created them still remain—poverty, ignorance, and the lack of a tradition or desire for orderly free government. It has been the aim of the American Occupation to try to broaden the base of the articulate proletariat and thus make for a sounder democracy and ultimately provide for a more representative government in Haiti. Hence its work in education, in sanitation, in agencies of communication such as roads, telephones, telegraph lines, and regular mail routes. These things naturally are deemed of secondary importance by the Élite, who see in the rise of a middle class a threat to the continuation of their own leadership."

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

563 829 ren. Others point out the difference between the lower-class Negro of the large commercial towns and the black peasants who live in the plains and mountains. The former, in contact with the roughest of white sailors, are a disgrace to any people, while the countryfolk, seeing only a select few of the whites, appear "to have an innate idea of the white man's superiority," and so treat him with respect. The peasants, according to these speakers, have all the virtues and vices of "wild races": they may acquire a kind of French varnish, but they are "essentially an African people removed from their parent country."[11]

565 186 There are among the élite broad-minded, tolerant, and cultured persons. The average member of the caste, however, like the average American, is full of prejudices of all kinds. Travel produces a superficial polish; their patriotism consists of antagonism toward the outside world and an effort to secure position for themselves; they are sure that Haiti's laws are sounder, her culture superior, her schools more advanced, her civilization in general higher, than those of most other nations (France generally excepted).

563 829 There are evidences also of certain psychological twists. It used to be said that mulatto Haitians "hate their fathers and despise their mothers," meaning that in colonial times and for a short time after the élite did not like to remember that they derived from a master-slave union. They realize nowadays that they would be accepted as social equals in few countries, and this makes them protest by self-assertion. Certainly a majority of the élite would be completely unwilling to admit that things are anywhere better done than in Haiti.

184 565 181 829 One generation after the wars which led to independence, the greater number of Haitians had practically forgotten that there was an outside world. Haiti was all they knew. With no standard of comparison for their lot in life the peasants ate, slept, raised their families, fell ill, and died without bothering their heads about such academic abstractions as equality. This uncomplaining acceptance of life, routine, and fate seems to be the essence of peasant existence. The Haitian peasant has been bound to the soil by mental inertia and by tradition more effectively than ever by law. When he has revolted it has been through conviction that someone was trying to change the old familiar ways, or because of physical maltreatment. Peasants have been bribed and paid to revolt, but as mercenaries they have entered only half-heartedly into warfare.

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[11] The phrases quoted here are fragments of statements made by Haitian élite to the author.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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In most countries in which Westerners are familiar, social distinctions take the form of classes, which are to a greater or less degree mutable. In Haiti, as we have repeatedly indicated, the distinctions are so rigid that *caste* is the only properly descriptive term. There is hardly a Haitian who would not be able to state immediately whether he or any person he knew was, or was not, élite. So it has been with steady persistence ever since Dessalines and Christophe gave way to Pétion and Boyer. Élite youth marries élite girl, and the folkways of the group are passed on from parent to children, thus perpetuating the distinctions. In the pages which follow, all the marks of separation of castes will be examined: religion, economic occupation, marriage, language, manners, and the rest.

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Certain aspects of the classic example of the caste system, seen in India, are lacking in Haiti. Religion, for instance, does not require caste endogamy, nor does civil law implicitly acknowledge caste lines by reference to the rights of people of a certain occupation. Custom does more than religion and law could, however, to enforce conformity to the understood rules. Probably the most open efforts to enact caste lines into law were the pronouncements of Dessalines and Christophe that all but a few people should be bound to the soil; and Boyer's Code Rural—a feeble echo of days gone by. The two black rulers were able to enforce the distinctions they made; but when they died their feudal arrangements lapsed, while the separation of classes continued. With the recurrence of revolutions after 1843 it behooved the élite, when occasionally they were in authority, not to lay themselves open to fresh attack upon grounds of aristocratic presumption, for they never knew when they might need the support of the masses. Any black revolutionary leader would have been able to turn an enacted caste law to his own ends, even if a Senate consisting predominantly of light-colored men had had the power to enact such a law. Time and inertia won the battle for the élite. By not joining issue with the masses at any definite point, the aristocrats gained their end of caste distinction, for they were willing to endure the self-discipline necessary to the maintenance of social standards, as the masses were not.

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Just as in colonial days the ambition of the well-to-do freedman was to go to France for his education and his holidays, so in free Haiti the lure of France has continued to be strong for the aristocrat. There is not a trace of animosity against the country which enslaved the Negroes, and which in 1802–3 tried by trickery to take away the

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

565 rights of people of Negro blood. As a distinguished Haitian re-
484 marked, "It is from France that we draw our culture, our language,
our literature, our attitudes of mind: why should we not love her?"
177 The more time the élite spend in France, the less kinship they feel
186 with the masses. There is not necessarily any conscious snobbery in
this increasing discrepancy; it simply results from a life spent in entirely different environments. The Boston Brahmin, for example, may be kindhearted and yet feel little kinship with a Mississippi share-cropper.

564 Inside the castes one may find social distinctions familiar in democracies. There are well-to-do élite who set the standards of manners and entertainment, and there are peasant landholders who through force of personality dominate their rural neighborhoods. The intellectual man of the upper classes stands somewhat apart from the social whirl of "high society." An important government official has more prestige among the leisured classes than a small businessman, just as a powerful religious adept is more honored among the peasants than a happy-go-lucky ragamuffin. It is obvious, however, that within the élite caste social discrimination occurs more frequently and is more accurately observed than among the country people.

[184] Such phrases as "Haitian religion" or "Haitian public opinion"
[771] are accurate only in so far as the person who uses them defines the
adjective "Haitian." One might describe truly a phenomenon charac-
[208] teristic of ninety-five out of a hundred Haitians and yet, in the
opinion of those who dominate the economic, political, and social
life, do injustice to Haiti.

PART II

RELIGION

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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

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INTRODUCTION

IF the visitor to Haiti is first struck by the wide separation between 771
the élite and the peasant masses, the person who knows Haiti only through books is sure to think of it as a country of Voodoo. There is no error of fact here, for Voodoo is characteristic of Haiti. Nevertheless, what the American conjures up in his mind when he uses the word is almost certain to be misleading. In spite of detailed reports of anthropologists the average American clings firmly to his notion that Voodoo is Negro superstition chiefly concerned with charms or spells to "hoodoo" (a variation of the same word) an enemy. Scientists rarely succeed in correcting long-held but incorrect or one-sided impressions of the meaning of terms; they end rather by inventing a new word, or else continue the generally losing fight for precise usage, and so preserve the confusion.[1]

Since there is small likelihood of eradicating the inexact connota- [104]
tions of "Voodoo," many recent anthropologists have adopted such spellings as Vodun, Vodou, Vodoun, Vaudou, and Vodûn, all renditions of local pronunciation of the same term. *Vodun* (pronounced Vo-doon) has been chosen for use in this work, in the hope that readers will bear in mind that the folk religion is not mere idle superstition. A grasp of the real and distinctive religious beliefs and cult practices of the Haitian is very necessary to an understanding of the social picture.

Like its caste system, the religious life of Haiti presents far-reaching 771
contrasts. The only approved religion of the country is Roman 195
Catholicism. To this faith all the élite who are religiously inclined, or
wish to pay formal homage to the institution of religion, belong. 184
No Protestant sect has ever gained a real foothold in Haiti. Catholic [346]
churches are among the imposing edifices in every town; Catholic [793]
priests are an everyday sight as they go about their parishes; Catholic
brothers and sisters, with state support and approval, direct much of [871]
the higher education in the country.

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[1] Witness in anthropology the contrast between the popular and the scholarly meaning of *culture*, *race*, *taboo*, and *fetish*; in chemistry of *reaction* (as when a man is asked his "reaction" to an opinion); in psychology of *instinct*, *innate*, and *inherent*; and in sociology of *caste*, *institution*, and *social*.

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Paralleling the accepted form and existing at the same time, is the Vodun religion. To this faith practically every member of the lower caste adheres; but no casual visitor ever sees a Vodun "temple," or would recognize one if he saw it. Vodun "priests" likewise have no characteristic dress to set them apart from their barefoot country neighbors. The state gives absolutely no support to this folk religion, which has no seminaries, no orders, no publishing house, nor even any orthodoxy. One is not a member of the Vodun religion or church; rather one believes and practices Vodun.

The paradox of the religious situation in Haiti lies in the fact that although the masses are Vodun worshipers, most of them are likewise Catholics; that although the élite formally disapprove of Vodun, many of them are profoundly interested in it; that although the state supports the Catholic Church and officially frowns on Vodun, it does not, cannot, and apparently would not if it could, suppress it altogether. The result of these contradictions is a strange intermixture of creed and ritual, mental struggles among certain of the élite, supersensitiveness to foreign opinion in connection with "Voodoo," and a clandestine air which adds to the mystery most strangers are determined to find in Vodun.

An understanding of these religious ambiguities must depend to some degree upon a knowledge of Haitian history, for both Catholicism and Vodun have colonial origins, together with local peculiarities and historical developments, which make them characteristically Haitian.

[p.115]

VI

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

1. *French Colonial Backgrounds*

WHEN France was first establishing a foothold in the New 175
World, religion was one of the consuming passions of 771
the French people. Priests accompanied early explorers, missionaries consecrated their lives to conversion of the Indians; monks, nuns, and parish priests were a vital part of the pioneer settlements of New France. Every family in the mother country hoped that at least one of its sons would devote himself to the service of the Church. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were, par excellence, missionary centuries.

By the time the colony of Saint-Domingue was acquired, however, this religious zeal was on the wane, and just when the colony was becoming prosperous and populous France was entering the phase of her history known as The Enlightenment. Although the growth of the colony is impressive from many points of view, religion is not one of them, for planters intent upon money-making and luxurious living in an exploitative tropical colony gave little energy to spiritual development.[1] The Roman Catholic Church, [792]
being the official church of France, was naturally the only important religious organization of the colony; the congregations authorized to send clergy to Saint-Domingue—Carmelites, Capuchins, Dominicans, and Jesuits—divided the territory and work between them.

No doubt the fathers did some assiduous work. Official historians of the Roman Church in Haiti give the definite impression that their task was arduous and not very rewarding.[2] The torrid heat, diseases (especially yellow fever), the long distances and poor means of transportation were discouraging enough; until the middle of the eighteenth century there was the added difficulty of the poor human

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[1] It is revealing to see what characteristics of the culture of their mother country [114]
colonists bring with them to a new region. French Canadians, in contrast to French [771]
colonists in Saint-Domingue, kept many more customs of old France. See J. G. Ley- [178]
burn, *Frontier Folkways* (New Haven, 1935), pp. 54–57.

[2] A good account of the inertia of religious life in colonial Saint-Domingue is given [114]
in P. A. Cabon, *Notes sur l'histoire religieuse d'Haïti* (Port-au-Prince, 1933), chap. I.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 material—Frenchmen who lived "in a deplorable state of morals,
771 too often recalling those of the freebooters and buccaneers" who
were their ancestors and predecessors. Even when the calibre of the colonists improved, religion was a minor concern, business and pleasure pushing it well into the background.

There was no great antagonism toward the fathers; indeed, not enough attention was paid to the priests and their work to warrant any very strong feeling. It was indifference and insolence the fathers had to face, or, if they showed too great an interest in the welfare of slaves upon a plantation, suspicion and peremptory curbs. By the old
[671] Code Noir under which the colony theoretically operated, masters
were obligated to send their slaves to Mass on Sundays and feast days under penalty of heavy fines; the Code likewise prescribed the baptism of all blacks and their instruction in the Catholic faith. But just as the colonists ignored all parts of the Code antagonistic to their own economic interests, so specifically did they disregard the sections dealing with their religious obligations.

175 Some priests were in any case not too zealous. It was much more
793 agreeable to attend only to external forms, and so participate in the
662 charming life of high society, than to stand firm against laxity. If a
567 priest showed enthusiasm for his duties to his African charges he was
[792] almost certain to be accused by the planters of stirring up the slaves
and undermining the foundations of colonial society. This was, in fact, the very accusation leveled at the Jesuits to bring about their expulsion from the colony in 1764. The example was not lost upon other priests.

175 "The safety of the whites demands that the Negroes be kept in
771 profound ignorance," said one of the later governors in a message to
563 France. This sentiment, perfectly expressing the conviction of the
majority of planters, not only prevented any secular education of the blacks, but actually kept many of them from instruction in catechism, creed, or any part of the Catholic faith. If instruction is forbidden, few of the sacraments can be administered, for how can a person be confirmed, confess, do penance, if he know not even the first principles of the faith? Few masters objected to the baptism of slave children; on the other hand, they roundly disapproved of the sacrament of marriage for their blacks, since this might place an obstacle in the way of slave sales, and even open the way for assimilation of blacks and whites in the colony.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Granted these obvious difficulties, there is still little to be said for 175
the zeal or integrity of churchmen in Saint-Domingue. Father Cabon 193
cites a report to Rome in 1794, which, he remarks, "was not designed 192
to be made public, and does not bear the earmarks of passion,"
and which flatly states that "since the expulsion of the Jesuits, the curés have for the most part led lives so indecent . . . that the citizens and Negroes have lost all the sentiments of religion which the Jesuits gave them."[3] There had been distinguished churchmen in Saint-Domingue before 1750, authors, scientists, teachers of some note, but none appeared thereafter. The rich French colony was not a bright star in the Catholic crown.

Undeterred by those who might have been their spiritual guides, 175
the white people followed the easy path of self-indulgence. The [556]
universal testimony of visitors is that, with a few notable exceptions, [185]
immorality and cruelty were daily commonplaces. To make a [647]
fortune was the prime ambition of every white man, since money [661]
made possible the luxurious enjoyment of this world's goods. Protest [693]
against money-making or soft living would have been futile. Administrative [466]
agents turned public office to their own profit; judges
sold justice to the highest bidder; planters drove their slaves to death; [193]
and priests dispensed religious solace for a tidy sum.

The freedmen, who in everything patterned their lives after social 175
leaders in the white planter class, had no more concern for religion 771
than their models. They attended Mass occasionally as a social event, 184
where they might see and be seen. When in the latter days of the colony discriminatory legislation required that colored persons sit in separate parts of the church, most of the affranchis simply refrained from attending Mass: their religious zeal was not so great as to make them submit to the public shame of segregation. In their daily lives, likewise, they followed the example of the white planters in pursuing pleasure rather than sobriety, "culture" rather than religious zeal. Like the whites, they were often licentious in their conduct. When it came their turn to direct affairs of state in free Haiti, there was little interest in spiritual matters among them. The intellectuals of the group paid homage to the liberal philosophers of the century rather than to religious thinkers.

If religion was at a low ebb in the prosperous days of the colony, 175
it almost disappeared in the excitement of the years following the 771

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[3] Ibid., p. 35. revolt of the slaves (1791).

revolt of the slaves (1791). Priests fled or went into hiding with the
175 other whites, so that Masses lapsed or were said by religious but
771 unordained mulattoes. Upon his accession to power in Haiti Tous-
643 saint L'Ouverture made several attempts to rehabilitate religion in
659 the country, for the Church he felt was a stable institution which
might help in giving order to the turbulent land. He tried to accomplish the return of priests to the island parishes and churches. There are indications that Toussaint was not himself deeply religious; his pronouncements are formal, but one cannot say that they appear to be deeply felt. In his proclamation of October 10, 1798, announcing the expulsion of the English, he orders thanks to the God of Hosts, recommends to his chiefs of corps that the soldiers pray morning and evening and faithfully attend Mass on Sundays. In a public address he enjoins upon parents the duty of teaching the catechism to their children.

175 The use of Catholicism as an aid to statecraft is apparent in his
659 official dealings with the Church. His constitution of May 9, 1801,
195 states that "the Catholic religion, apostolic and Roman, is the sole
religion publicly professed." To obtain priests he besought the return of many who had fled the slave insurrection; he likewise turned to France, but France at this time was less than ardent in religion; nor were French priests likely to wish to come to an island ruled by blacks, particularly one which Napoleon was quite obviously planning to subdue. Toussaint addressed himself, therefore, to a schismatic abbé, Grégoire by name, in whom he saw a friend. Whether Grégoire might have helped him to establish the Catholic Church firmly as a part of Haitian life, with only a handful of repatriated colonial priests, we cannot know, for in 1802 the final war of independence began and the island, in convulsion, had no time for spiritual matters.

2. *Catholicism in Independent Haiti*

175 Dessalines, the passionate, violent, and licentious founder of the
643 new state, although not an enemy of the Church was not its active
659 friend. In his slaughter of whites he spared several priests who had
195 come to the country under Toussaint's persuasion, either because
these clerics were obviously inoffensive or might later prove useful to him. Just as he controlled every other detail of Haitian life, he was determined to direct church affairs. He reserved to himself the right to fix the limits of jurisdiction of each priest and to nominate, even

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to appoint, curés to the vacant parishes. His independence of action 643
could not fail to give offense to Church authorities. One of his first 659
appointees was a black ex-slave, Félix, who had been a drum major 795
in the native army. Félix was made curé in the important town of [793]
Saint-Marc.

The constitution of his empire (May, 1805) indicates that Des-
salines did not intend to make himself head of the Church, but rather 175
planned a complete separation of Church and State. Article 50 reads: 795
"The law admits no dominant religion"; while the next article 642
grants freedom to all cults and refuses state support to any denomina- 659
tion or minister. No attack was made, therefore, upon Catholicism, yet the disestablishment of that Church was a serious blow to its prestige. Not in the specific provisions regarding religion was the Church most weakened, but rather in the "liberality" of articles dealing with actions upon which the Church had taken a firm moral
stand. Thus Article 14 declared that "marriage is an act purely civil [582]
and authorized by the government," while Article 15 permits
divorce by the state. Early laws of the empire still further under- [586]
mined the position of Church doctrine. Illegitimate children were [848]
granted the same legal rights as legitimate ones—a generous provision which removed one of the strong reasons for marriage; separation of husband and wife except by divorce was forbidden, and this prohibition practically encouraged the divorce disapproved by the Church; finally, the grounds upon which divorce might be allowed were broader than those existing anywhere else in the Western World at the time: mutual consent, application from one party to the marriage, or simple allegation of incompatibility of temperament or character.

From the promulgation of this constitution in 1805 and for the 175
next fifty-five years, Haiti was in open schism from the Roman 795
Catholic Church. The Holy See refused to recognize either the 648
Haitian state or the provisions of its constitution, and it declined to 771
allow priests to enter the country. Certain Haitian presidents were
friendly enough to Catholicism, and others were openly desirous 178
of reëstablishing a state religion, but the breach once made was not healed by mere good wishes. The longer the schism endured, the farther the people grew away from the doctrines and practices of a religion in which they had never been firmly grounded. At the moment of independence, when all minds were more open to new

3: .Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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795 ideas than in later years, the habits of regular attention to religious
649 duties might have been fixed; by 1860 it was too late. Religion
771 existed during those years, but it was a strange gallimaufry of
178 Catholicism and folk belief.

On the whole, the rulers of young Haiti were tolerant of the
175 Catholic Church even to the point of advancing its interests, in so far
795 as these might benefit the state. Their pronouncements and actions,
642 nevertheless, were not those of ardent personal believers. Pétion's
643 constitution of the republic in 1806 once more established Catholi-
cism as the official Church. What it gave with one hand, however, it
659 took away with the other. Thus:

> *Art. 35.* The Catholic, apostolic, and Roman religion being that of all Haitians, is the religion of the state. It and its ministers will be protected.
>
> *Art. 36.* The law assigns to each minister of that religion the extent of his spiritual administration. These ministers may not, under any pretext, form a body within the state.
>
> *Art. 37.* If in the course of time other religions are introduced, no person shall be hindered, so long as he conforms to the laws, in following the cult he has chosen.

The Catholic, then, is the state religion, but only because the Haitians have heretofore been nominal Catholics. It occupies a position of practical fact which it would lose if by the introduction of other cults Haitians should be drawn away from it. Its ministers will be carefully watched to see that they do not, as a group, try to exert political pressure. And what freedom of action is possible to a church whose ecclesiastical parishes can be limited or extended in size by the civil legislature?

Pétion no more fought religion than he fought any other conventional institution approved by civilized people; but he did little to foster it. He received certain Wesleyan missionaries with considerable hospitality, remarking that "education increases the dignity of
[848] mankind." He appeased the good Catholics by repealing the law
concerning the rights of illegitimate children, substituting for it a
[871] more moderate French rule.[4] Likewise, he invited the Catholic
Church to participate in the education of Haitian youth.

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[848] [4] The French practice allowed an illegitimate child recognized before a wedding equal rights of inheritance with legitimate offspring, while giving only quarter rights to a child recognized after marriage.

Christophe had a great deal more to say about religion than any of 175
the other early Haitian rulers. In a speech following the promulga- 643
tion of his constitution, after severe censure of the government of 795
Dessalines, he said: 659

> It is necessary to raise again the dignity of religion, for weakened morals 642
> leave young people open to the licenses of their age. Liberty has been assailed by traitors, enemies of their fellow citizens, and sold to our cruelest enemies. It is assured to you now, have no doubt! Shortly you will see these vicious men and their criminal efforts vanish like clouds.
>
> Public education, after religion and liberty the most precious benefit [871]
> mankind enjoys, will be reanimated and sustained by morality; it will [586]
> again be held in honor and reverence amongst us. Divorce, that traitor among customs, is rigorously prohibited and proscribed forever.[5]

Like Pétion, Christophe made the Catholic Church official, but he indicated the dictatorial path he intended to follow by adding that no ecclesiastical decree or law might become effective without the
consent of the President.[6] He completely overturned the law of [848]
Dessalines concerning illegitimate children; his decree deprived such offspring of any claims of inheritance whatever.[7] In a country where practically no one had been legally married such a ruling was severe, but Christophe hoped that his severity would force his subjects into wedlock, and this the Catholic Church was bound to approve.

Making the Church official did not strengthen its hold upon the 175
people. In 1814 (seven years after he had promised "to raise again 795
the dignity of religion") the kingdom was served by only three 793
priests, one of whom Christophe had named archbishop. The King 659
was preoccupied with form, and having created a nobility he needed 648
a church to lend dignity to his realm. Consequently in 1811 he reorganized the clergy in his kingdom, establishing an archiepiscopal see and three bishoprics. The reorganization, except for the archbishop, remained a paper plan because the Pope refused to coöperate by giving the schismatic church his approval.

All the early rulers seem to have been rather innocent in their dealings with Rome. They felt, apparently, that as heads of state they had but to express a desire in order to have His Holiness ap-

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[5] This speech, made on February 18, 1807, is cited in Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haiti* (Port-au-Prince, 1848), II, 354–355.

[6] See the law of March 18, 1807.

[7] Law of March 25, 1807.

175 prove. Dessalines had sent a small number of Negro youths to Rome
795 to receive consecration and ordination from the Pope, so that they
793 might return to initiate a black priesthood for the black state. Pius VII
659 (through the interference of Napoleon, it was held by the Haitians)
648 refused to consecrate the aspirants to holy orders, and they had to
return as they had come. Christophe thought to avoid such a snub by presenting His Holiness with a *fait accompli*. Having in his kingdom a Spanish Capuchin named Brelle who had formerly anointed Dessalines emperor, Christophe made this friar head of his reorganized church as "archbishop of Haiti and grand almoner to the King," giving him a "palace" and a yearly income derived from the revenues of his "see." This achieved he asked papal approval, but had sorrowfully to announce, "*Le roi d'Haïti eut la douleur de ne pas même recevoir une réponse de Sa Sainteté et passa outre.*"

Pétion's legislators were even more naïve. Their constitution of 1816 (of course, really the President's) granted to the President the right to have a bishop come to Port-au-Prince "to elevate to the priesthood those young Haitians who feel called to embrace the ecclesiastical state."[8] It was apparently assumed that without the approval of the Pope any bishop could come in and forthwith "make" priests. The insertion of this article in the constitution confesses the disadvantages of schism. The last surviving priests of the old régime, those few who had remained in spite of the breach with Rome, were dying off; no new priests were being sent in; therefore, if the Catholic Church was to endure in the republic, it must have Haitian priests. Certain clerics fleeing political revolutions in South America came to Haiti, but since they spoke French badly, did not improve the religious situation. It was impossible to get sympathetic priests from France, in view of the relations of the two countries at the time. The provision of the 1816 constitution, however childish, was at least an effort to perpetuate the church in Haiti.

It is nowhere recorded that either Pétion or Boyer had any opportunity to persuade a bishop to come and consecrate the desired priests. Deprived of support by the Papal See, in open schism, the Haitian republic was forced to make all regulations governing religious affairs. Boyer carried on various negotiations with Rome looking toward rapprochement, but the schism endured. Organized

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[8] Article 50 of the 1816 constitution.

Organized

religion was never at a lower ebb in Haiti than toward the middle of 175
the nineteenth century, as whole generations of citizens were growing 795
up who had never known the proper forms of ritual, and had no 771
real religious training. The outward shell of the Church covered steadily more "superstition," more homely beliefs and practices, and the long divorce from Rome permitted the growth of a native religion which later could not be eradicated, no matter how assiduous the labors of Catholic priests.

During Boyer's quarter-century the once Roman and Catholic 175
Church remained the official religion of the state, but its head was 795
now the President. Organization simplified as orthodoxy declined. 771
By 1840 there was only one order of priesthood; no archbishop, 659
bishops, canons, curés, or other titled dignitaries, but only "priests." 643
The people were not taxed to maintain the state Church; there were no tithes or forced contributions for the support of public worship or the repair of parish churches, no heavy list of clergy living from levies on the people. However, if the Haitians were not burdened by imposed religious fees, they were still through their own fears subject to steady tolls for services by the degraded men who then called themselves priests.

Every effort of the state failing to provide proper religious leader- 175
ship, Boyer resigned himself to permitting those who professed to 795
be priests to practice in the republic. There were seventy so-called 793
priests in the country in 1840. Some of them had once been in holy orders but were now unfrocked: they found in Haiti not only a haven but a fertile field for gain. In addition to these religious renegades came adventurers who knew just enough of ritual and theology to use the priestly garb as a cover for easy graft. Both groups encouraged crude superstition with a view to making money. They baptized houses, boats, and doorposts, and blessed fetish charms or amulets, all for a fee. Immorality was flagrant, and many of the "priests" had mistresses and children. The debauchery of some was so notorious that Secretary-General Inginac had publicly to rebuke them and even to banish a few from the country. A visiting [114]
Quaker, benignantly tolerant of most of what he saw in Haiti, was scandalized by the religious situation. He said that the sole aim of most of the clergy was to secure gold and silver "as quickly as they can, to send to Europe for investment." Excepting a very few (notably the priests at Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien, and Jacmel), he

175 concludes: "With regard to the ecclesiastical institutions of the
793 republic we may safely say . . . that if the standing army be one cause
795 of the degradation of the people, the Church is surely another; and
[114] the sooner it can be reformed, the better for religion, for morals, and
for the physical well-being of the community."[9]

175 Eventually the state felt it necessary to protect the people from
793 these predatory priests. True, people paid for what they considered
795 to be services performed, but the legislators could not permit un-
limited graft in the name of religion. An act of 1840,[10] therefore, set
659 a fee of half a dollar for each baptism;[11] $8 for a marriage with Mass, $4 for one without a Mass; an ordinary Mass, 37 cents; a High Mass, service, or funeral "of the first class" (that is, with choir, sacristan, acolytes, and churchwarden), $60; funerals of the second class, $20; funerals of the third class, $10. Articles of the act specify what shall constitute the three classes of service, and it is then stated, "Neither rectors nor vicars shall receive anything for offices at which they do not assist in person, except in cases of illness." The Haitians were not receiving true religious instruction, but at least their government tried to prevent their being mulcted by the spurious churchmen.

175 Since Haiti had no schools except the few attended by children of
the élite, religious instruction of youth was almost nonexistent. The
771 average élite man was openly an unbeliever, for it required little
184 acumen to show him that if the priests represented religion there was nothing to commend it. Hunt in 1860 said: "Many of the educated are about where the French were when they left the island. They believe in Voltaire, whom I have not unfrequently heard them
[562] characterize as the greatest man who ever lived."[12] In contrast to the
[114] men, the women made more of a show of being devout and attentive to the formal duties of religion, but according to Franklin they

> are not actuated by any religious feeling. Going to church is a mere matter of parade with them, the sabbath being a day of festivities, and not set aside for religious devotion. The female congregations which frequent the churches in Hayti appear better prepared for an opera, or some other public amusement, than for the sacred duties of offering up their prayers in adoration of the Deity.

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[9] John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, pp. 98 ff.

[10] Chap. IV, articles 28–31.

[11] The figures cited in the Act are in gourdes.

[12] Benjamin S. Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans* (Philadelphia, 1860), p. 18.

The men seldom or never go to mass, except on the days particularly set 175
apart by the government as public fêtes. On these occasions the president 114
and all the officers of Hayti go in procession, but the idea of devotion, I 771
believe, never enters their contemplation. Such days are merely set aside 796
for celebrating some particular event, which it is wished should be handed
down to posterity. These occasions present only the external symbol of 184
religion, the whole people being either ignorant or careless of its real
character. Their manner and appearance during the celebration of the mass
shew that they have no inward feelings of piety or devotion.[13]

Catholicism in Haiti, then, had fallen on evil days; Protestantism, 175
on the other hand, was unable to gain any foothold. Boyer, indiffer-
ent to all religion, did not even care to tolerate Wesleyan mission- 795
aries as Pétion had done, for when certain of them arrived and were 797
met with "persecution and stoning by a mob," it required persuasion
to gain his assent to freeing those the police had taken into custody.
He forbade any further meetings of Wesleyans, on the ground that
they stirred up riots. At the close of Boyer's administration it was [162]
estimated that there were only about 1,200 Protestants in the country, mostly Methodists and Baptists, and these primarily Negroes who had come from the United States to settle in the republic.

Although the Haitian government probably derived a certain 175
satisfaction from controlling a state Church, Boyer was impelled
both by circumstance and his own temperament to obtain the ap- 795
proval of the Holy See. His own tepid spiritual zeal had nothing to 648
do with the case; Haitian public order would benefit by a superior 659
group of priests, and Haitian prestige would rise, he thought, with 643
recognition by Rome. Having already in 1826 settled the conflict between France and Haiti in the political sphere, Boyer tried assiduously to end the schism from Rome. His propositions were examined with benevolence by the Pope, who conferred upon the primate of the Indies, archbishop of Santo Domingo, the title of archbishop of Haiti. This personage, however, was a Spaniard already established in the comfortable city of Santo Domingo amidst people of his own nationality. He could not be persuaded to move to Port-au-Prince. The failure of Boyer's efforts is due more to this ecclesiastic than to uncoöperativeness on the part of Rome. From 1834 to 1860 the Court of Rome had official representatives in Haiti, but they cannot have been very effective men, for conditions in

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[13] James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, pp. 394–395.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

175 religious life were not improved and the schism endured. The arch-
795 bishop of Haiti seemed to regard his new title as applying vaguely to
648 the island, not the country, of Haiti, and since all his vicars were
659 Spaniards unable to speak either French or the Créole dialect, they
643 did nothing for religion in the Haitian republic.

[793] Ties broken by a single radical action may require endless patience and persistence to knit together their severed threads. The impetuosity of Dessalines caused the rupture; it was prolonged by indifference to religion, absorption in economic and political matters, fear that France might use to her profit any *rapprochement* with Rome, and a certain complacency in subordinating Church to state. Inertia, however, was the real obstacle in the way of healing the breach. It is much less trouble to let conditions remain as they are than to make a change whose results no one can foretell. But the longer the rupture, the less understanding the people had of steps necessary to reëstablish the Church.

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771 When in 1847 Faustin Soulouque, the ignorant, became president, the horizon had never seemed darker for organized religion. The black general, suddenly impelled by a quirk of fortune into high office, was a man of the people in his religious attitudes. All their belief in magic, in the mystical power of certain rites, in charms and spells—all their "superstition" as the Catholics called it—Soulouque shared. For the first time in Haitian history one is aware that the folk beliefs brought over from Africa had become welded into a recognizable form, under the name of Vodun. To colonial writers "Vaudoux" had been primarily a name for certain dances; to the early Haitian élite it seems to have connoted either occult rites or vulgar claptrap compounded of gibberish, old wives' remedies, and sensual dances. But in the long and deepening twilight of Catholicism, the various elements were fused, until by Soulouque's time the Haitian was familiar with the general beliefs, rites, and "priesthood" of Vodun. As Soulouque had broken with the tradition of presidents who wished Haiti to be recognized as one of the community of civilized Western nations, so he allowed the traditional respect for Catholicism to die. As an emperor he was a transplanted African chief; as a believer he was a follower of Vodun. The rites were practiced and the sacrifices made openly now. Men in high places dared to reveal their belief in native tenets. For twelve years Vodun flourished with official approval.

175 795 648 659 643 The depths to which Haiti descended under Soulouque made the task of his successor relatively simple. It would prove wise and generally popular to reverse the Emperor's action, in whatever respect. President Geffrard was the more successful as an antidote to the Emperor because of his practical intelligence. The best time to strike for the revival of Catholicism would be immediately after the heyday of Vodun. In 1859, the first year of his incumbency, Geffrard consequently undertook negotiations with the Holy See, sending two plenipotentiaries for the discussions. Because the Haitian delegates persuasively depicted the sorry state of religion in their country, because they showed themselves and their President willing to defer to papal wishes, and because the new Pope was filled with missionary zeal to reclaim Haiti for the Faith, all problems were overcome. An early agreement was reached, and the Concordat, signed in Rome on March 28, 1860, was approved by the Haitian Senate on the first of April. A commission was dispatched to Haiti immediately, one which did thoroughly and well its task of delimiting the boundaries of dioceses, allocating bishops and other clergy, and founding a seminary. An archbishop of Port-au-Prince was consecrated, and the Catholic Church, Roman and apostolic, at long last became officially established once more in the republic. The breach of fifty-five years was healed.

175 771 In one sense the reform had come too late. All the peasants were by this time thoroughly imbued with the ideas of Vodun, as were the lower orders in the towns. Most of the élite either clandestinely practiced Vodun or ignored religion altogether. On the other hand, practically no Haitian was opposed to Catholicism, not even the most ardent devotee of the obscurer cult. The native faith had grown up quietly enough, making its adjustments to the outward forms of Catholicism which still existed in the country. To every Vodun worshiper there were simply two hierarchies of spiritual beings, each with its own powers; to believe in one was not to deny the other. The new Catholic priests, then, met no hostility; what they had to deal with was an ineradicable folk religion which accepted everything and rejected little in the spiritual realm.

175 795 [346] The Archbishop, his band of forty priests, and a small group of Brothers and Sisters set to work with fervor. Nearly everything had to be rebuilt from the ground. Church buildings were in such disrepair that it was considered more economical to erect new ones than

175 795 346 to try to renovate the old. Gradually the work became established, increasing in scope with the years.

175 795 It is not necessary to present a detailed history of the work of Catholicism in Haiti since 1860. The most striking feature of these years is its relationship to Vodun, which will be treated shortly. The progress made by the Church itself can best be seen by a summary of conditions in 1930.

794 795 162 Haiti is divided into dioceses named after its principal towns and cities. The population statistics are based upon figures of births covering more than fifty years, and although estimates, they are probably as accurate as any other population statistics for Haiti:

Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince	942,700
Diocese of Cap-Haïtien	453,000
Diocese of Les Cayes	628,000
Diocese of Gonaïves	475,000
Diocese of Port-de-Paix	153,590
Total	2,652,290

793 To care for this large and predominantly illiterate population there are 205 priests,[14] only 8 of whom are Haitians; 105 Brothers, and 366 Sisters.[15] The assiduous educational work of these *religieux* will be discussed in another connection.

794 162 The country's 10,200 square miles are divided into 112 parishes, which generally correspond to the political communes, although there are several parishes in the larger centres of population. In the rural sections 465 mission chapels are located at strategic points.[16]

550 Any casual attempt to assess the importance of religion in the daily

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[14] Of these, 156 are in charge of parishes or missions (the secular priests). The remaining 49 are regular clergy (that is, belonging to a religious or monastic order). All parishes in the diocese of Port-de-Paix and two in Port-au-Prince are in charge of the regular clergy; the other regular monks are doing educational work or other special service connected with the dioceses. [794]

[15] The Brothers are Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne; of the number 83 are French, 10 French Canadian, 9 Spanish, and 3 Haitian. The Sisters belong to three congregations: 146 to St. Joseph de Cluny, 198 to Les Filles de la Sagesse, and 22 to Les Filles de Marie. [793] [792]

[16] All the figures cited above are drawn from the *Report of the Forbes Commission to Haiti*, 1930, pp. 16–17.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Any casual attempt to assess the importance of religion in the daily

lives of the people is sure to prove erroneous, for in no phase of life 771
are outward appearances so deceptive. What the unsophisticated 184
peasant believes can be ascertained on the whole more accurately
than the beliefs of the intelligent élite. To the foreign observer,
Roman Catholicism seems to play as large and as small a part in the
thinking of the Haitian upper classes as among members of upper-
class French society. Outwardly, the élite are professing Catholics
or not religious at all. It is considered proper to attend Mass and [554]
otherwise to pay respect to religious forms; actually one loses noth- [558]
ing in prestige if he is not a practicing Christian. Society seems to
exert no pressure in the matter. Only if a member of the upper class
fears for the security of his social position, or knows that rumors are
afloat of his addiction to Vodun, does he feel impelled to become
assiduous in his open attentions to the Church.

The national sensitiveness to skin color is apparent in the priestly 793
complexions. Since the old tradition lingers that "baptism by a black 829
will not stick," not even the peasants welcome native Catholic
priests. The God and saints of Christianity need the intercession of 563
white men, just as the Vodun spirits need that of natives. In the early
days peasants stoned Negro priests who tried to administer the
Catholic sacraments. Such an attitude toward a black clergy falls in
well with the preferences of the élite. If there were Haitian priests,
they would probably be drawn from the élite class since this is the
educated group; but it might happen that some devout peasant
would rise to the priesthood and so have the care of a parish including
élite—a contingency unthinkable to the aristocrat. Snobbishness, 196
indeed, affects the usefulness of the town priests, for the élite mem- 191
bers of the congregation insist on having sermons in French, a
language which only the small minority understand, rather than in
the Créole which is the speech of everyone, intelligible to gentry and
humble alike. The Mass is consequently celebrated for the people at
large in unknown tongues, Latin for the ritual, French for the ser-
mon; the benefit they derive from it must be wholly from their
inner communion stimulated by the actions of the service. The town 193
priests are often willing enough to accede to élite pressure in the mat- 191
ter of language, for they know French as their mother tongue and 196
would have to learn Créole; although some of the more devoted
priests become adept in native speech, using it in their personal

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

793 ministry and in sermons in country chapels.[17] For the élite, well
191 groomed, sitting with his missal in a seat bearing his name plate, the
796 psychic elation to be derived from hearing a sermon preached in a
[829] language which the rabble seated around him does not know must be very great—and very Christian.

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793 191 [17] I have heard a sermon in the chapel at fashionable Kenscoff preached in Créole, with the President of the republic, himself a master—and a politically astute user—of Créole in the congregation. Likewise, I have met priests who, although they have lived in the country [illegible] a generation, have never learned the tongue used by ninety-five out of a hundred of their parishioners all the time, and by a hundred per cent of them some of the time.

[p.131]

VII

VODUN

1. *Misconceptions*

THE second religion of Haiti is Vodun. It is not mentioned by officials as one of the spiritual assets of the country; its priests wear no regular habit; it has no town churches. Yet it is the living religion of the masses. Catholicism may have official and social sanction; indeed, most peasants do consider themselves as belonging to that faith, yet it is doubtful whether in any other Western country there is so universal an adherence to a common religion as in Haiti to Vodun. 771

If there had been a paid campaign of propagandist misinformation, it is unlikely that more untruths and half-truths could have been put into circulation about this faith of the Haitian people. Moreau de Saint-Méry describes something of it in his classic work on colonial matters, although most of what he tells concerns the dances, which he considered primarily a form of recreation. Pious visitors to Haiti in the early years of independence labeled it simply as a form of superstition and did not bother either to understand or misrepresent it. By the time of Soulouque it was known as a rather definite folk religion, but only after 1863 did what was really a simple set of religious beliefs and practices suddenly become notorious, making Haiti the object of macabre curiosity and of reports whose chief characteristic was gruesomeness. 114 771

In 1863 occurred the *Affaire de Bizoton*, and it may as well be recounted forthwith as the prime origin of all misunderstanding which has pursued Haitian religion—although to emphasize it is like giving an account of Christianity with all the emphasis on witch burnings, torture of heretics, and excesses of bigotry. 175 771

On December 27, 1863, a little girl of Bizoton named Claircine disappeared from home during the absence of her mother. Search for her was futile until after several days it was discovered that she had been killed and used as part of a sinister sacrifice by religious fanatics. An inquest, discreetly managed, resulted in the arrest of fifteen people, of whom eight were longer detained. The trial of

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 771 [682] these four men and four women began on February 4, 1864, arousing all Port-au-Prince, the local population as well as the foreign legations and consulates. The guilt of the accused was soon evident; following their complete confessions they were declared guilty of sorcery, cruelty, and murder, and all eight were condemned to death. They were executed on February 13, only six weeks after the crime. What these fanatics had done seemed as horrible to the Haitians as a similar crime would seem to Americans.

Much publicity was given the trial by foreign journalists who, with their flair for making the most of a dramatic tale, added whatever they could pick up by hearsay of the beliefs which had prompted the human sacrifice. The reading public, uncritical and uninformed about Haiti itself, if they gave the lurid accounts a second thought seem to have assumed that such actions were "what one might expect of Negroes." The incident would shortly have passed into that oblivion which awaits sensational news from obscure parts of the world, if it had not been kept alive by the British Minister, who was also an author.

114 771 In the 'eighties, after retirement from diplomatic service, Sir Spenser St. John wrote a two-volume work called *Hayti, or The Black Republic.* It was probably no more egregious in its dramatic account than were scores of other books by Englishmen who, in the latter years of the Victorian era, were discovering darkest Africa, holding dominion over palm and pine, and taking up the white man's burden all over the "heathen" world; but it possessed the literary qualities which made people buy it and discuss with avidity its horrendous details. The adjective "black" in its title seemed almost to refer to the moral characteristics of the people rather than to their skin color. Sir Spenser made a great many accurate, if somewhat one-sided, observations on the customs of the people, giving the public the first readable book in decades about the Haitians. The grisly climax of his story, however, is the *Affaire de Bizoton.* He amassed an astonishing collection of tales, practically all at secondhand, to prove that Vodun (Voodooism, he called it) was the real religion of the Haitians (which it was), and that it was compounded of the vilest superstitions and most fiendish practices, of which the most essential was human sacrifice of "the goat without horns" followed by a cannibalistic communion. Which, needless to say, it was not.

This is the sort of dramatic tale uncritical readers seem to like to

believe. It stuck in people's minds. Since Sir Spenser's time tourists 114
to Haiti have habitually spent a few hours ashore, heard drumbeats 771
from the hills, and shuddered deliciously as they conjured up images of weird goings-on—black magic, licentious dances, and frenetic orgies. Novelists during the past half-century have spun their tales full of local color, while "serious" authors have made small fortunes out of pseudo-scientific books with just enough fact mingled with their lush imaginings to give "an air of similitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative." Their language runs into such purple phrases as "blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened,"[1] to describe the religious exaltation of the people at a Vodun service. Under this constant rain of misrepresentation, Haitians who care for the good opinion of other nations have become extremely sensitive on the subject of the folk religion. Many of them deny its existence; others speak of it as something beneath their attention. The more they try to cover it over, however, with silence and professed contempt, the more mysteriously fascinating it becomes to the foreign visitor. The tourist who goes to Paris expects to see the Eiffel Tower, whatever its aesthetic faults; the tourist in Haiti wishes to see, without quite knowing what he means by the term, "a Voodoo dance." No amount of scientific writing about the real character of Vodun will change the popular misconception. For every reader of accurate ethnographical or anthropological treatises on Vodun[2] there are hundreds who feast morbidly on sensational books.

Haitian Vodun is not the same as the hoodoo of American Negroes.[3] The word is etymologically the same, whether American Voodoo, Haitian Vodun, French Vaudoux, or Spanish judu (whence our "hoodoo"): all derive from a Dahomean (West African) word signifying "god" or "spirit."[4] It is the generic term for all deities. 192

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[1] This phrase is taken from W. B. Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York, 1929), p. 42, but might easily have come from half a dozen other journalistic descriptions. [114]

[2] Particularly recommended are Melville J. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York, 1937), and Dr. Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi parle l'oncle* (Port-au-Prince, 1928). [173]

[3] See Herskovits, *op. cit.*, pp. 139 ff.

[4] The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in a surprisingly superficial and brief article, gives a singular etymology to "Voodoo," tracing it to the Swiss canton of Vaud, where in the Middle Ages a heterodox faith sprang up which had to be practiced in secret. The implication is that any secret religion might be called "Vaud-ois," or "Voodoo." Evidently the author of the encyclopaedia article had made no serious investigation of the subject; most modern dictionaries, on the other hand, indicate the Dahomean etymology. [192]

114 This was recognized in colonial times by Moreau de Saint-Méry,
771 who wrote: "According to the Arada Negroes, the real followers of *Vaudoux* in the colony, . . . *Vaudoux* signifies an all-powerful and supernatural being on whom depend all the events which come to pass on this earth."[5]

771 Vodun is a true religion, in the same sense that Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or Christianity are all true religions. That is to say, it is a set of beliefs and practices which claim to deal with the spiritual forces of the universe, and attempt to keep the individual in harmonious relation with them as they affect his life. The word "superstition" is relative. It is a subjective term, being generally applied to beliefs which we consider ourselves too wise, too advanced, to cling to. The sophisticated skeptic calls the belief in miracles superstition; the Christian regards the reverence for certain animals in India superstition: it is all a matter of view. Using the greatest number of criteria available for the definition of religion as distinct from vague superstition, religion may be said to be a set of beliefs about spirits or gods and their nature, about the origin of the world, about good and evil, about man's relation to the universe he knows; it includes a set of practices of worship; it is an attempt to ward off misfortune and to get good; it treats of what happens after death; it is a system of seeking security, solace, and support in the face of a supposed supernatural.[6]

Vodun is all of these.

771 Like any other vital religion which has spread from its original
177 centre, endured through the years, and come into contact with other faiths, Vodun is not at the present what it was in its early days. Like others it has unconsciously borrowed—and in borrowing, transformed—ideas, concepts, practices, rites.[7] The greatest single influence exerted upon it has been that of the Roman Catholic Church with which the people have had continuous dealings, increasing in recent years, for more than a century and a half. Many aspects of

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[5] In his *Description . . . de la partie française de . . . Saint-Domingue*, I, 46.

[6] This alliterative phrase was suggested as a partial definition of religion by Prof. Raymond Kennedy.

[7] It need hardly be pointed out that Christianity is no longer the simple faith taught by Jesus, but a composite of that faith with scholarly theology, absorbed local practices, mysteries which flourished in the Roman Empire, secular philosophy—and, to put it briefly, the accretions of changing time. Similarly, Buddhism is more than the doctrines of Gautama, and Mohammedanism more (and less) than Mohammed taught.

Vodun, therefore, show the Catholic influence, exerted in the main 771
unconsciously. 177

Unlike the great religions, Vodun lacks a formal theology. As has 794
been said, no seminary exists for the training of priests and priestesses, 771
no congress or college of fathers states or amends the creed; there is no church court to discipline the individual enthusiast, or catechism for the young; no scriptures or sermons are printed or read to strengthen the faith. Vodun is an informal religion of action, not a formal one of reason. It flourishes because it is malleable, adaptive, suited to the needs of a people living close to nature and without education. To give a single lucid description of this Haitian folk religion, created as it is by everybody and by nobody, is about as possible as to give one description of home life, which varies according to the couple. We may, however, outline the common elements of creed and practice.

2. *Formative Days*

To say casually that Vodun is African in origin is to say little more 771
than that it does not stem from the great world religions. There is no 174
unity in Africa today; there was still less in the eighteenth century when slaves were being imported into Haiti. At that period it was possible to find a new dialect and a different set of folkways every few miles along the western seacoast. Two slaves from one geographical region (the Gold Coast, for example) might not understand each other or have the slightest predisposition to sympathize with each other's customs.

Colonial planters experimented with slaves from various regions 175
in Africa, just as they might compare breeds of horses; setting tracta- 567
bility off against originality, brute strength against skill, intelligence against health. In this quest for a perfect slave, Negroes were imported from all parts of the Dark Continent, from Senegal in the northwest around the five thousand miles of seacoast to Mozambique and Madagascar in the east. Partly because trading conditions were more favorable in the Dahomey and Congo regions, and partly because the qualities of Dahomean and Congolese were preferred, Negroes from these two sections soon came to predominate over others in the colony. Whereas "Congo" was merely a geographical term, implying no community of feeling among the natives living

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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567 along that river, Dahomey was the name of a powerful kingdom
under a political administration which embraced a fair amount of
interchange of ideas and similarity of social institutions, including
religion.

175 Discretion made the planters separate slaves who knew each other,
567 in order to minimize opportunities for revolt among them. This
178 policy, although it prevented the rapid growth of "slave" customs,
at the same time dispersed Dahomeans all over the colony; beliefs
and practices held in common among the slaves were likely to take
on a Dahomean cast. Since their work was directed, their freedom of
movement limited, and their family life broken up, there was practically
no opportunity for the outcropping of *any* African ideas
relating to economic life, government, property, education, or
175 marriage. The one sphere in which it was possible for Old World
178 beliefs to continue was the religious. No slave dealer could penetrate
796 the minds of his workers or silence their folk tales and folk songs in
771 the evening when work was done; even the strictest plantation
535 owners allowed dances in the slave quarters on Saturday nights and
Sunday. It is the dance, a vital part of Dahomean religion, which
seems to have formed the nucleus around which the diverse beliefs
of African tribesmen grouped themselves, for it was a form of action
which need not involve anything more than amusement or emotional
release, if the participant were not religiously inclined. In the
beginning, as Goethe observes, was the Act. To this simple Act of
dancing, the Word, with thought behind it, could easily be added
later. Practically all African tribesmen danced; and the numerous
Dahomeans had a dance which was ostensibly for diversion but could
be turned to a religious purpose as well.

771 Here, then, was the skeleton of a slave religion. Although every
171 single African tribe had its own beliefs and ritual, each (so far as we
174 know) had common elements with every other one. For example, all
slaves, whether Senegalese or Angolese, believed in a multiplicity of
spiritual beings, some of whom controlled the aspects of nature—lightning and storms, the sea, the sky. They thought that disease and
other ill fortune came from spirits who must be placated in order to
win back health and well-being. All felt that the normal course of
events could be altered by magical spells, formulae, or charms; that
one could bring misfortune to an enemy, luck to oneself, or ward
off otherwise inevitable fate. Most of them had been accustomed to

learn the properties of plants, both for healing and for poison. Except 771
for the belief in spiritual beings, this folk knowledge would hardly 171
have been classed as religious, for it was useful in every phase of daily 174
life; the classification is that of the anthropologist, not of the simple
black.

If Dahomean beliefs prevailed over others of African origin, it was
chiefly because of the numerical preponderance of Dahomeans in the
colony, together with the popularity of their religious dances. The [776]
Dahomean spirits or gods were Vodun; the dance in which the [796]
worshiper sought the inspiration of the spirits was a Vodun dance. [535]
Like all but the highly organized religions, this one recognized the
validity of other beliefs. Its practitioners were not bigots. No
hierarchy existed to keep out new accretions. Imperceptibly these
were added to the original basic form: here an Arada spirit, there a
Congolese prayer, and in many instances a Catholic saint, until the
composite Vodun religion began to take shape.

There is no evidence that during colonial times Vodun was ever 174
considered important by the white ruling class—certainly not as a 535
faith. To most planters the word was the name for a vigorous dance. 796
Judging from Moreau de Saint-Méry's description it was held openly [192]
enough, at times being witnessed by the whites as a sort of nocturnal [114]
diversion. Moreau knew, as did other whites, that there were
"superstitious beliefs" connected with it, yet the offhand use of the
word "superstition" was indication enough that the beliefs were not
regarded as important. We have seen, however, what profitable use 175
the slaves were able to make of the apparent innocence of their
dances. When the idea of revolt began to germinate among them, 669
gathering on each plantation at least once a week they had ample 567
opportunity to hatch their plans. It is known that the campaign for 202
revolt was developed partly under the stimulus of the Negro 793
Boukman, a *houngan* or priest of Vodun. By means of drumbeats, 771
which to the whites merely pounded out the rhythm for dancing
but had for centuries been a means of communication at long distance
in parts of West Africa, that ripening plot was telegraphed from one
plantation to another. Even more important, perhaps, was the unity
of feeling made possible, despite all incoherence of tradition and
language, by the Vodun background. 114

The revolt of half a million slaves was a success. This fact has been 175
rather too calmly accepted by historians of Saint-Domingue, who 669
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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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175 have explained it chiefly by the surprise element of the uprising. But
669 when else in modern history have slaves successfully revolted against
668 their armed masters and become permanently free? Successful revolutions
even of people not in bodily slavery have had acknowledged
leadership, whereas in Haiti no real leader appeared for the insurgents.
Boukman's influence, indeed, at its widest never reached beyond a
part of the northern plain; he had about the same range of power as a
[793] ward boss in the United States. On the plantations Hallaou, Hyacinthe,
Lafortune, and others whose names are unimportant or unknown,
Vodun houngans likewise welded slave opinion within their
narrow districts. But no single great leader appeared. As the conflict
was developed, without plan or unity under the divided and contradictory
action of numerous blacks, what held the people together
was, negatively, their hatred of the white masters; positively, their
Vodun beliefs. Only later in the decade did a true leader, Toussaint
L'Ouverture, emerge to consolidate their victory.

776 As often happens among unsophisticated people convinced of the
793 rightness of their cause, the local Vodun leaders were sure of their
own invulnerability through the protection of one or another of the
761 spirits.[8] They convinced their followers as well, to such a degree that
782 when an invulnerable chief fell there were dozens of reasons to
781 explain the unexpected death rather than any disillusion. Usually,
failure to follow the rigorous propitiation requirements of the protecting
god offered the key to the misfortune. Various ones of them
were known to be exacting and troublesome. The leader at Trou-Coffi,
Romaine by name, had absorbed enough of the Roman
Catholicism in Vodun to feel that the Virgin Mary was his especial
[789] patroness.[9] Beyond this specific belief in invulnerability was the
general trust that Vodun spirits would lead their devotees to success,
would give them a happy issue out of all their distress.

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[171] [8] A parallel case of belief in invulnerability because of divine protection was that of
[781] the North American Indians both at the time of Tecumseh and later in the Sioux outbreaks at the climax of the Ghost-Dance Religion. See James Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1892–93 [Washington, 1896]), chap. X.

[114] [9] The importance of Vodun beliefs in connection with the slave revolt is stressed
[781] by Dr. J.-C. Dorsainvil, *Vodou et Névrose* (Port-au-Prince, 1931), pp. 33–34. He says of many of the chiefs: "The belief in their invulnerability was not at all the result of calculation, but was a true state of mind, a sort of autosuggestion which explains very well the chronic heroism of certain leaders of the revolution in Saint-Domingue and of the war of independence of 1802–3."

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Vodun, then, was both widespread and powerful enough to be 175
turned to most effective ends in 1791. Contemporary accounts of it 771
still saw it as a meeting ground of superstitions. The French naturalist, 114
Descourtilz, for example, was primarily struck by the use of the [787]
occult in connection with Vodun; he especially describes a woman [789]
who, under the seizure of her god, took a live coal in her hand
without being burnt; a husband who by the use of magic struck his
inconstant wife with a languorous malady, effective for half a year;
and the knowledge of poison which was combined with the practice
of magic. He mentions but one of the Vodun gods by name but
implies the existence of many others.[10]

Madiou, Haiti's first historian, likewise always spoke of Vodun as 114
a savage survival; he says of a native general, "Lamour Dérance, 771
plunged in gross errors, put his faith in *sorcery*, in the prophecy of 781
papas, or priests of *African fetishism*."[11] In his scornful distaste for the
vulgar he clearly indicated by his own italics some conspicuous elements of the developing religion: magic, the use of fetishes, and a Vodun priesthood. His illustration of Dérance's error was his making soldiers believe that bullets could not wound them:

> When he marched to combat he was preceded by bands of Congos, Aradas, Ibos, Nabos, Mandingues, Haoussas, who threw themselves against the French battalions with a prodigious intrepidity, crying that the bullets were but dust. But this courage which *superstition* fed was shattered against the ramparts of . . . the Europeans' square formations.

It is noteworthy that the first three black rulers set themselves 175
against Vodun because of its potentialities for sedition. The plots to 643
overthrow the old régime had come to fruition at apparently inno- 796
cent Vodun dances. Although the ingenuous aspect of the dance 671
gathering had deceived the white masters, Toussaint, Dessalines, and 659
Christophe knew the meaning of the assemblies. All three had to 669
drive their people hard and knew that resentment would be an 794
inevitable consequence; it must not have an opportunity to burgeon 798
at nightly gatherings. Toussaint was the strictest of the three, for he
forbade all dances and nocturnal assemblage.[12] The other two singled

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[10] M. E. Descourtilz, *Voyages d'un naturaliste en Haïti, 1799–1803* (Paris, 1935 ed.), pp. 116–118.

[11] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, III, p. 33.

[12] In an order of January 4, 1800.

The other two singled

175 out Vodun dances for their bans, permitting the purely social dances.
643 On the eve of the first anniversary of independence, "as soon as
794 retreat was sounded, African dances of all kinds began in the tents
796 and open fields; the Vaudoux dance alone was proscribed; the noise
of the drums did not quiet down until morning."[13] Dessalines was
671 more suspicious of Vodun than the other two for, being a supersti-
659 tious man himself, he feared that some of his growing number of
798 enemies might use sorcery upon him; consequently whenever his
771 active police reported meetings of Vodun worshipers he had the
offenders shot if they could be caught. Practically all Haitians knew how to distinguish the rhythms of Vodun drumbeats from those of other dances, so that it was not particularly difficult to track down the meeting places. What Christophe really believed, no one could say. He paid outward homage to Roman Catholicism, of course, but rumor persisted of his great faith in magic and the power of African fetishes.[14]

175 The élite mulatto presidents, Pétion and Boyer, did not deign to
643 dignify Vodun by prohibiting it. No revelation of their attitude
toward it survives, but we may note that no law of their thirty-six-
794 year tenure of the presidency mentions it. From their other opinions
659 one concludes that they regarded it as merely another of the people's
798 innocent and harmless aberrations. Not one of the foreigners whose
curiosity about the Negro republic led them to report on Haitian
796 life of this period gives an intelligent account of Vodun as it then
771 was. Macaulay, writing in 1831, for example, describes the annual
114 celebration at the source of Grande Rivière de l'Artibonite; he mentions the festive dances (not Vodun) and singing, then says: "Morning ceremonies consisted of a solemn sacrifice at which the blood of victims immolated for the feast were offered, and libations of wine were poured on the spring."[15] This was clearly a Vodun sacrifice. Brown, in 1837, writes as a religious man:

> No race is, more than the African, given to religious feelings, though these being but mere sensations entirely independent of thought and reason, manifest themselves in a display of idle fooleries, or dark and hideous terrors of the imagination. They intermix the legitimate ritual of the Catholic faith with the mysterious adoration paid to their national Fetishes, and the

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[13] Madiou, *op. cit.*, III, 186.
[14] See Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Haiti*, pp. 90–91.
[15] Zachary Macaulay, *Haïti* (Paris, 1835), pp. 90–91.

African obi and the Catholic priest both come in for a share of their respect 114
and homage.[16] 796

This is the usual tone of the comment on native religion, as when 771
Candler in 1842 speaks of funerals in country places "with the *rites of heathenism*, such as are practised to this day in the heart of Africa."[17] Of these conventional criticisms of Vodun, one of the more thoughtful is Bonneau's:

> The shocking phantasmagorias of fetishism paralyzed the intellectual development of the African race for six thousand years; superstition is in some sort inherent in its nature. The [Haitian] people need to break with their past. Catholicism has been prodigiously patient and courageous, but it does not possess the necessary corrective for extirpating the fetishism which immobilizes the black population. The Catholic Church, by fractioning the religious sentiment, by forcing thought to diffuse itself in order to take in a thousand secondary details, by imposing on the people practices without number which tend to materialize the cult, by placing as intermediaries between God and men a multitude of saints and genies, encourages and fortifies the tendencies, even the most deplorable ones, of the black race, whose intellect has been shrouded in mist for centuries precisely because it can grasp only with difficulty the relationships between things and ideas, tending rather to lose itself in details than to rise to general and synthetic conceptions.[18]

If the fixing of periods has any clarifying value, one might set the 175
stages of the development of Vodun as follows: 771

1730–1790, its Emergence, when the importation of slaves was 794
steadily increasing, with a gradual ascendancy of Dahomean ideas;

1790–1800, its practical Testing in the fires of revolt when, out of apparent innocence and enforced secrecy, Vodun effectively united the slaves in their action for freedom;

1800–1815, its Suppression under the black rulers;

1815–1850, its quiet Diffusion to all the people and assumption of the form it now exhibits.

The middle of the nineteenth century was the turning point. Before 175
then it had been so to speak in gestation; under Soulouque, then 771
ruling, it publicly emerged. Until the mid-century élite people had 794

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[16] Dr. J. Brown, *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo*, II, 273.
[17] John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, p. 166.
[18] A. Bonneau, *Haïti: ses progrès—son avenir*, pp. 24–25.

175 ignored when they did not frown upon it. As we have seen, the
771 aristocratic Madiou spoke of Vaudoux as "the sorcerers of our country
794 districts," and President Riché in 1846 whenever he heard a suspect drum, went himself to silence it. Under Soulouque, on the other hand, the élite did not dare to show contempt for practices so dear to His Imperial (if benighted) Highness; indeed, one priestess of Vodun then boasted, "If I were to beat the sacred drums and march through the city, not one from the Emperor downwards but would humbly follow me."

175 For at least a century Vodun had developed with no real obstacles
771 beyond the twenty-year prohibition of the Three Great Blacks. The
794 white planters in the colonial era had been too indifferent and imperceptive
798 to stop it, while the élite of the republic were too proud to concern themselves. The Catholic Church, which might have been its most effective enemy, was too lax and too much hampered in colonial times to curb "slave superstition," while from 1805 until 1860 because of the schism no real Catholic priesthood labored in the country. All this changed after Soulouque: the schism was healed; priests of true missionary spirit came to Haiti; the *Affaire de Bizoton* gave the enemies of Vodun a focal point of attack. Since 1860 the Catholic Church has not ceased its war against the folk religion. Occasionally, as in the days of Toussaint, a ruler has suppressed it. Such executives have probably known, however, that it was much too late to eradicate Vodun. It had decades in which to send down its roots. Efforts against it have about the same effect as the persecution of the early Christians—a strengthening of the faith of believers, an outward submission to restrictive rules but increased devotion to rites now performed secretly, and in the case of Vodun at least, an added attraction to the cult because of this very secrecy. At least one president has been known to be an ardent worshiper. Today, much as the élite turn up their noses at Vodun, there are many who look to it in their hour of need, when the Catholic faith seems to fail or medicine proves helpless.

3. *Vodun Belief*

771 The sincere Vodun worshiper is generally an illiterate peasant or humble laborer who would never bother his mind to formulate a definite statement of his beliefs. Because there is no clearing-house

for Vodun theology, nor any established order for the service, 771
variety is one of its chief characteristics. Impossible as it is to cite a definitive list of Vodun beliefs, those most generally held might be combined into a Creed, which would run about as follows:

> I believe in scores of gods and spirits, guardians of earth and sky, and of all things visible and invisible;
>
> I believe that all these vodun (who are called "loa." or "mystères") are potent, although less majestic than *le bon Dieu* of the Christians; that some of them came with our ancestors from our former home in Africa, while others we have learned about in our Haitian fatherland; that these loa have power to possess us, their worshipers, informing us by inspiration of their needs and desires, which we must faithfully satisfy; that these loa, like us, are capable of good and evil, gentleness and anger, mercy and revenge;
>
> I believe in the efficacy of sacrifice; in the pleasures of living; in respect due to twins; in the careful cult of the dead, who may return to our abodes; in the spiritual causation of diseases and misfortune; in the dance through which we may be "mounted" by our loa; in the possibility of interfering with the normal flow of events by means of magic; in the efficacy of charms and spells; and in the Holy Catholic Church.

Those who conceive of religion in terms of a rigid orthodoxy, 771
monotheism, sin, a moral law, eternal rewards or punishments, will 177
not understand Haitian Vodun. It is as hospitable to new spiritual 776
conceptions as any faith could be, requiring only that the additions be applicable to life as it is lived in the Haitian hills and valleys, and that they adapt their shape and terminology to the native penchant. Monotheism is rarely the practical belief of simple people, but rather of prophets and scholars. It is easy enough to believe in an all-powerful god but much more difficult to arrive at a conception of a unique God. In Dahomey the people had reached some such stage of belief in omnipotence but not of uniqueness. When later, in slavery, transplanted Africans heard the Catholic doctrine of a god who ruled creation by the fiat of his conquering will, they assimilated the idea with a significant change: the Christian God became the Great Master of the other gods. The slaves very simply placed Him at the
head of their pantheon. Even today, the first words of a Vodun [796]
service are the request for permission from the Great Master to go on 114
with the service. As Dorsainvil says: 178

> This term chosen to designate the supreme God was imposed on them by 776
> their environment. The colonist, the master, incarnated for the slave the

114 highest idea of power and action. Logically, he could not conceive of the
178 unique God of the Christians, by analogy and by inspiration, except in
776 terms of the sentiment of fear mingled with the awe which the colonist inspired in him. Once this first step was taken, the rest was only the work of time. In the degree that the holy beings of Catholicism were unfolded to them, the creole Negroes everywhere identified these with the *vodun* (spirits) of the Dahomean cult.[19]

771 The Christian God could not stop the "deifying" process, for Vodun must have simple spiritual explanations for daily occurrences. How
776 could a god who ruled the earth clutter his mind with such small details as the mango crop or one's private aches? There was room of necessity for more, and lesser, gods.

771 Orthodoxy and monotheism, then, are alien to Vodun; so likewise are the notions of sin and a moral law. These also are refined ideas.
781 The Catholic priests do their best to instill into the minds of the people the Church doctrine on these points, but gluttony, envy, sloth, and other deadly sins are not easy to explain to a people whose worldly goods are pitifully few, whose bellies are never full, and who must work hard to live at all. Just how the simple Haitian interprets the fulminations of the fathers against sin a foreigner can hardly tell, and the priests are not at liberty to reveal the secrets of the confessional.[20] A peasant loves life. His pleasures are simple enough, partly because he lacks money for expensive ones. Puritanical self-searching is alien to the normal Haitian. The touchstone is infallible: so long as life moves along smoothly one need not worry; if misfortune comes, one of the spirits is angry or out of sorts and his worshipers must propitiate him. What spirit could mind a man's dancing, drinking clairin, watching a cockfight, or otherwise indulging himself?

771 Vodun does not conceive life to be a struggle between good and evil. Its conception of spirits is anthropomorphic. No man is wholly
776 good or wholly evil, nor is any god; human beings can generally be persuaded into any mood, and so can the gods; as there is variety in human personality, so likewise the gods are not immutable. Some are more to be feared than others, some may be regarded with tender affection, but all are capable of working both weal and woe.

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[19] Dorsainvil, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[783] [20] A priest once told me that a young Haitian girl in sorrow confessed, as her most heinous sin, that she had given food to a dog. Apparently her idea was that food was too precious to be given away to animals; hence she had sinned.

A gentle spirit may cause great harm to a person who neglects his 771
commands, while a spirit whose power makes possible the most 776
malignant magic may bring good fortune to his devotee. By conceiving his spirits as in manner and desires resembling himself, the Haitian can understand his little universe without subjecting himself to the bewilderment which faces a simple Christian trying to reconcile an all-loving Father with the obvious evil He allows on earth.

One must approach Vodun without the religious preconceptions of Christianity or Judaism. Suspending our notions of orthodoxy, monotheism, sin, heaven, and hell, we may examine more closely the creed suggested above, in an endeavor to round out its real meaning to the Haitian.

"I believe in gods and spirits . . ." The white man would recognize most easily among the Haitian's multiple gods the God of Christianity whom every Vodun worshiper confesses. It is this God who is meant in the homely expression of native acceptance of one's lot: "*Bon Dieu bon*"—the good God is really good, however remote. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are likewise acknowledged, although it seems probable that they do not touch the hearts of people as much as the Great Master. The Blessed Virgin, on the other hand, is very real and near—so real, in fact, that she is sometimes actually merged with a spirit of African origin who has many of the Virgin's storied characteristics. Certain angels and a select group of Christian saints have made a special appeal and so found their niche in Vodun; others are not denied but merely ignored because the Haitian is not well acquainted with them.

To the spirits (one hesitates to use such misleading words as "gods" 776
or "divinities") not drawn from Christianity the name "loa" is 174
applied. There seem in general to be two classes of these: those who 192
have an African origin, and those with a Haitian background only. The former group is called "Rada," the latter "Pétro." The word Rada is derived from the principality of Allada in Dahomey, and would seem thus to indicate that all the Rada loa were Dahomean; this, however, is definitely not the case. Numerous loa can be traced to the Congo region and others to the smaller West African districts, yet all of these are indiscriminately called Rada. In current usage, accordingly, the word has lost its strict geographical significance. The term Pétro is explained in an illuminating paragraph by the [192
Haitian savant, Dr. Dorsainvil: 114]

114 The common people of Haiti are continually creating [his phrase is much
more revealing: "en gestation de"] *loa*, or new Vodoun "saints." Popular
196 tradition, long before independence, refers to a certain Don Pédro, a being
174 of flesh and blood who from the Spanish end of the island had come at a
776 certain period to live in the mountains of the commune of Petit-Goâve.
This Don Pédro was the man who introduced into Haiti that violent dance which, by corruption, the people call "the pétro." Upon his death, Don Pédro came to occupy an honorable place in the Vodoun pantheon, bringing in his train a whole group of progeny, such as Jean-Philippe Pétro, Criminel Pétro, etc.[21]

174 As might be logically deduced, certain powerful ancestors become
776 deified as Pétro loa.

It would require field trips into every district of Haiti to compile a
184 full list of the various loa who receive homage from Haitians; some
776 appear to have only a local following, others are honored over a wide
district, and a few are reverenced throughout the country. If Vodun ever reached the stage of founding a seminary of sacred theology—a highly improbable event—one of its most imperative functions would be the collection, classification, and explanation of the attributes of the hundreds of loa, specifying whether they are Haitian or African in origin, Pétro or Rada, powerful or complaisant, inclined prevailingly to benevolence or to malice. Lacking such a proper catalogue, it will suffice to mention only the most commonly accepted figures. In reflecting upon the characteristics of these gods, the well-informed reader will be struck by the numerous parallels to divinities of other faiths so remote that Haitians could not possibly have known of them; similar emotional needs seem to produce similar deities to satisfy them.[22]

776 Legba is the name of the loa most frequently invoked, not because
he is the most powerful, but because he is the interlocutor between man and his gods. Before any ceremony may begin, Legba is addressed: "*Papa Legba, ouvrí barrière pour nous.*" If he is not first worshiped, the other deities may not come to possess the people. Legba guards every door and gate, every highway and crossroads. He is still an important god in modern Dahomey, where his attributes are much the same as in Haiti. The people feel no necessity of

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[21] Dorsainvil, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[22] Classical anthropologists might have called this phenomenon "parallelism"; the word is accurate enough if only similarity, not identity, be understood.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

making Legba (or any of their other loa) unusually handsome or 776 admirable; he is, on the contrary, honored none the less because he is a lame old man who wanders about clothed in rags. His homely aspect seems to be a part of his comfortable nature: the "Papa" with which his invocation is prefaced, though not unusual in addressing loa, seems generally to be spoken with overtones of real affection, with the same feeling of kindliness one has for a benevolent uncle in the neighborhood. In parts of Haiti Legba is associated with the Catholic Saint Anthony.[23] As with other loa, there are special attributes, sacrifices, places, and traditions pertaining to him which are characteristic only of limited localities.

Erzulie is the most generally acknowledged female loa. She is especially interesting because of her resemblances to the Virgin Mary. Although she is Dahomean in origin, she is conceived as pale, almost white, probably by the influence of countless lithographs of the Virgin circulated in Haiti as in any other Catholic country. Erzulie is very wealthy, possessing many different dresses and much jewelry. In these aspects she is unique among the loa. It is quite possible that [554] there is a causal connection between the conception of lightness of color and that of wealth, for the only women who possess jewelry and large wardrobes in Haiti are the light-skinned élite; on the other hand, many pictures of the Virgin depict her in queenly robes and adorned with gems, so that the idea may have been derived principally from her. Erzulie is a trembling woman inhabiting the water. She seems to have no one specific function in connection with which she is worshiped, as with Legba, who guards thresholds; rather, she is approachable in a confidential way, as an understanding mistress might be. Her favorite color being white, all animals sacrificed to her are white, whether turkeys, chickens, or goats.

In somewhat the same manner as Christians conceive of their God in diverse manifestations—Christ as priest or king, God as father or judge—so the Haitians in a more direct, illogical, and naïve way, think of their loa in different manifestations. Maîtresse Erzulie, for example, seems to change her major characteristics altogether when she is Erzulie Gé-rouge (that is, the Red-eyed); then she is Pétro, not Rada; boisterous and rather hearty, not trembling.

The third loa, Damballa, is so prominent that some of the early

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[23] Price-Mars, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

776 commentators thought him the most important Vodun god.[24] There are two plausible reasons for this emphasis: Damballa is the bringer of rain, a necessity for good crops but a menace resulting in desolating floods when it is too copious; second, his symbol is the serpent. To Christians this is a symbol of such long standing that it is easy to assume in connection with its appearance in Vodun the guile, diabolism, or occult force which it has at times represented in Christian tradition. Damballa, however, is certainly not evil in the same way as Satan; he is not even generally baleful. To honor him is quite fitting, and this attitude is at poles removed from the diabolism [136] of the Middle Ages. There are practically no snakes in Haiti. Because of Damballa's symbol he is quite naturally associated with Saint Patrick.[25] Like Maîtresse Erzulie, all his sacrificial animals must be white, for this is his color. Like her, too, he is Dahomean in origin and therefore Rada.

These three, Legba, Erzulie, and Damballa, can by no means be conceived as a trinity. On the contrary, it would be easily possible to select an entirely different group from the commonest loa, justifying inclusions and eliminations. There is, for example, Ogun, the god of war, who derives from Nigeria in Africa. Ogun can, if properly persuaded, protect his petitioners against bullets and weapon wounds. Like blood, he is red. This is also his favorite color, and so he prefers sacrifices of red cocks and food offerings of red beans with rice. There are likewise Damballa's wife, Ayida Oueddo, whose symbol is the rainbow; Agwé, god of the sea; Baron Samedi, patron spirit watching over cemeteries; Simbi, who lives in mango and calabash trees and is a bit too fond of drink. In any one country district, certain other loa might far outshine any of those mentioned. The longer one lives among the people, the more clearly he sees the validity of the first article of the creed: "I believe in gods and spirits."

787 "I believe that these loa have power to possess their worshipers . . ." It is more difficult to make intelligible to "civilized" people the phenomenon of possession than any other part of Vodun religion. Centuries of training in self-control have made us unwilling to give public vent to our emotions, whether religious or, indeed, of any sort. Not only does our tradition of good manners inhibit such ex-

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[24] See, for example, Bonneau, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–26 n.

[776] [25] He is sometimes also associated with Moses, who "lifted up the serpent in the wilderness."

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

pression, but in the case of religion the nature of our worship interposes barriers between us and the manifestation of feeling. Almost every denomination which has risen to prominence, no matter how anti-ritualistic in its beginnings, has grown more formally proper as it moved from simple meeting-houses to churches, or as it began to draw upon the middle and upper classes for its clientèle, if its origin was humble. Not many Americans would care to recall the fact that their own ancestors rolled upon the ground in religious frenzy or were seized with uncontrollable fits of jerking and shouting when "the spirit of the Lord" was upon them; yet such emotional displays were a regular feature of camp meeting revival services in the Ohio Valley frontier region and elsewhere. 787

In order even vaguely to apprehend Vodun possession, one must disburden one's mind of all notions of formalism, for although the priest as officiant has his place in the service, there is direct participation of the people in every Vodun service and dance. The religion is theirs, not the priests'. One must forego the idea of self-restraint, adopting rather the view that the chief end of worship is to establish direct communication with the gods. One must forget the belief that to lose consciousness, roll one's eyes, scream, and speak in a strange voice are signs of mental derangement, and regard all these abnormalities as very desirable achievements in religious life, symptoms to be contemplated with satisfaction by friends and family. A person possessed has no retrospective feeling of shame. Quite the contrary: he has won through to new peace and security, for a god has spoken through his mouth, revealing divine will. 787 796

Vodun possession is therefore something more than the elation of the Holy Roller, and less than the mystical exaltation of the enraptured saints, yet partaking of elements of both. The descending afflatus is more discriminate than in a Holy Roller service, for rarely is more than one out of five worshipers seized by the god; inversely, it is more general than the ecstasy of a saint, whose experience is partly notable because it is rare. Actually, there is in civilized experience no precise parallel to Vodun possession, which runs the gamut of emotions from gay fun to mordant depression. To emphasize the uniqueness of the Haitian variety of possession, it must be noted that it occurs according to definitely understood rules and clearly defined circumstances. If a worshiper in his enthusiasm should let himself be seized "out of turn," so to speak, he would be instantly called to order. 787

787 The language of possession is descriptive. When a god seizes a man, he "mounts" him; the possessed person forthwith becomes the god's "horse." The words are accurate, for the god seems to have as much control over his mount as a human rider would have over a horse whose will he dominates. The person mounted does nothing of his own accord while he is possessed. Under the invisible whip of the spirit-rider the "horse" does a great many things, and says even more, that would be unnatural or even impossible to him, unridden.[26]

Possession is more than the affair of a moment. In this respect it differs again from kindred seizures known to whites. A person may have to wait for many years before he is finally mounted, but the first loa who descends upon him is the chief of his deities, taking precedence over any other who might subsequently possess him. The initial seizure is a vitally important experience, corresponding roughly to the conversion or confirmation of persons in other religions. The subject is carefully observed by experts, so that no mistake will be made in the deductions from actions and speech as to the identity of the god. This loa is baptized by sprinkling water on the head of the possessed person. Thereafter the loa is called "*maît' tête*," as a recognition of the subservience of his mount: any agreement the devotee might make with another loa under a particular possession would have to conform to the initial agreement with the maît' tête. At a man's death the loa, which has, like more than a guardian angel, accompanied him through life, is taken from his head so that the man's soul may go to God—the Christian God.[27]

The possessing god may be either male or female. It frequently happens that a male loa mounts a female devotee, in which case she is addressed by a male name, wears male clothes, eats and drinks the things her loa prefers (no matter how distasteful to her ordinarily), and otherwise manifests his characteristics. This extraordinary change of personality is accepted naturally enough by the other participants in the rites, although the transformation is to foreigners a psychological phenomenon of prime interest. Dr. Dorsainvil devotes a book to the neuroses connected with possession; as he says: "One of the first consequences of the Vodoun crisis is the substitution for the

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[26] Zora Neale Hurston, in her gaily written *Tell My Horse* (Philadelphia, 1938), has a vivid chapter on the possession effected by the distinctly Haitian loa, Guédé. She entitles this chapter in Creole: "*Parlay cheval ou*" (Tell my horse)—the words with which the loa begins to dictate through the mouth of his mount. See pp. 232–250.

[27] See Herskovits, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–151.

787 normal personality of the subject a second, accidental personality which, except in the cases of conscious simulation, introduces real modifications in the ordinary state of being of the possessed person."[28] The phrase is noteworthy: "except in the cases of conscious simulation." Since the possessing loa frees his mount of his normal personality, certain persons at times try to pretend that they have been mounted in order to gain a desired end, which may be amatory, vindictive, or whatever. The people, however, are well acquainted with the normal penchants of everyone in the community; when they have their doubts about the authenticity of a seizure, they can easily by teasing words arouse the pretender's quite normal anger, by ingenious movements call forth an everyday response and so make the "mount" betray his ruse.

Since the main emphasis of this chapter is upon the religious, not the psychological, aspects of possession, no more than a passing reference can be made to the absorbing question of the normality of seizure. Two facts are important: it is confidently expected that possession will occur at every significant service; and it is known beforehand that not every worshiper will be subject to it. Some of the people seem to be definitely incapable of intense religious feeling or expression, others react almost immediately with overwhelming emotion, still a third group senses the mystery but cannot take the final step of inspiration.

114 727 Dr. Dorsainvil, a physician and historian, considering the recognized capabilities and limitations of Vodun worshipers with regard to seizure, maintains that possession is a species of neurosis, resulting in part from the historical tradition which makes seizure respectable and desirable and in part from the inheritance of neurotic tendencies in families. Professor Herskovits, an anthropologist and ethnographer, avers on the contrary that possession is, in terms of the patterns of Haitian religion, not abnormal but normal. He would stress the first of the two facts above: seizures occur at all important services. He does not deny the release afforded from psychic tension by yielding to possession; also he grants that the seizure might secure for a man the fulfillment of his suppressed desires for material goods or physical satisfactions. What impresses him, however, is the rules which rigidly govern possession. Gods are permitted to come only to members of the family giving the rite—that is, if the loa are under

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[28] Dorsainvil, op. cit., p. 113.

787 proper control, as they should be. If an unwanted god persists in
114 mounting an individual, the pertinacious one is commanded to go
away or the victim himself is sent home until he can recover his own
personality. Many people strongly resist possession when it is imminent. Judged by our own standards, possession of the Vodun
variety could certainly not be called normal; judged by Haitian
standards, however, it would be absurd to call abnormal an experience known and approved by the majority of the community.[29]

776 Possession occurs either at the service or at the dance. Here again
535 the white man has nothing in his religious experience to enable him
787 to comprehend the pattern of Haitian religion. The service corresponds nearly enough to the Catholic Mass or to more realistic
sacrifices in ancient Jewish rites, but neither of these faiths nor any
other the white man knows well has dancing for religion's sake. In
Vodun, however, the dance is of equal importance with the service.

776 In the tiny *houmfort* (also spelled *hounfort*) of the priest, which is
346 little more than a hut with earthen floor, the service begins. To call
776 this structure a temple is at once to make it too imposing and to
confuse the white man in his attempt to understand the scene; it is
no more of a temple than was a tiny primitive early Christian
church. Most houmforts in Haiti would be crowded if twenty people
were present. At one end is an altar, more or less resembling the high
altar in a Catholic chapel; on it are placed a crucifix, flowers, candles,
fruit and food, wine, lithographs of Catholic saints, and whatever
other objects, Catholic or Vodun, local practice may dictate and
individual taste prefer. Upon the floor are traced formal cabalistic
patterns, generally in corn meal, both to fend off evil influences and
as required by the particular loa. The officiants may be male or
female or both. To the service ordinarily come only the members of
the family and their specifically invited guests; neighbors and friends
will attend the subsequent dance.

776 A student of Catholicism would find in the first part of the service
788 a great deal of ritual borrowed from the Church. The blessing,
177 genuflections, making the sign of the cross, responses, and the like,
782 all clearly show a Catholic background which accords well with
787 certain objects upon the altar. Imperceptibly the strictly Vodun
element obtrudes itself. The loa are asked whether they will accept

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[29] The statements of the two sides of this controversy may be found in Dorsainvil, *op. cit.*, throughout; and in Herskovits, *op. cit.*, particularly pp. 146–147.

the sacrifices; food is set before the sacrificial animal, and if this food 796
is eaten by the creature or creatures, it is known that the loa is satisfied. 782
Then comes the actual sacrifice of the animal, a slaying neither 787
ostentatious nor dramatic, since often it does not occur in the houmfort 788
itself. It is at this juncture that possession is looked for. The loa,
by seizing one or more of his devotees—or, if possession fails, by the 177
divination of the priest—makes known his desires. The demands of
the loa are likely to be modest: a candle, a special article of food,
certain specific attentions. Occasionally he insists upon an impressive
sacrifice. Whatever his desires, they must be gratified or else the loa
will mildly harass the family; long refusal will produce anger and
full vengeance. If the god is Rada, his sacrifice will be white, red, or
vari-colored; if he is Pétro, he will wish black or gray animals—
chickens, turkeys, goats, bullocks.

The service itself, then, is entirely religious in nature, consisting
wholly of ceremonies and rituals conducted by officiating priests,
with the purpose of restraining or pacifying gods who may have
been pursuing a family with misfortune, or gratifying those who
have made it happy. The dance following the service apparently 796
expresses the joy of the family at dangers averted and gratitude for 535
blessings bestowed. [782]

In contrast to the private character of the service, the dance has all
the appearance of a social event. Invitations to it are sent all over the
countryside. People attend for good fellowship, gossip, and the sheer
delight of dancing, but in the background one is always aware of a
religious element as well. The dance is held in a specially constructed [346]
tonnelle, a roof of boughs and leaves supported by uprights. Drums [534]
are not always used at the earlier service, but no dance could be held
without them. The crowd drifts in slowly, so that the dance may be
long in getting under way. The best drummers in the community
may not arrive until after two or three hours. Three drums of
different sizes, all properly baptized, set the rhythms, and sometimes
gourd rattles embroider a commentary upon the beat. Whereas at 796
the service possession comes as a result of the priest's invocations, at 535
the dance it is inspired by the drumming. Each loa has his own 787
particular rhythm, so that as soon as it is determined what god has
seized upon a dancer the drummers take up the rhythm of that god.
The officiant immediately rushes to the mounted person with a
calabash of water and a candle; by following the "horse" around and

796 steadying his attention, he practically hypnotizes him back into full
535 consciousness. As soon as the possessed is normal again, water out of
787 the calabash is poured at the central post and a sign of the cross is made with the candle before it.

796 Contrary to the expectation of thrill-seeking white visitors, the
535 Vodun dance does not merit the name of an orgy. True, the dancers
786 wear their old clothes, for they are going to have violent exercise; true also, those who are possessed give the impression of losing some of their inhibitions. But the dancers do not embrace each other as at a white man's dance; the drinking which occurs is hardly ever excessive; and the climax of a successful dance is a religious experience.
[831] The Haitian is no more obsessed by sex than is the American; indeed, living simply and without many of the artificial restraints of "civilization," he is probably less so. What white visitors sometimes see, under the impression that they are witnessing a Vodun dance, is nothing more than a secular Saturday night social dance. It, too, has drum rhythms instead of an orchestra, musical instruments being rare in Haiti; but the dance has no more religious (or "Voodoo") significance than a barn dance in the United States.

771 Creed and practice go hand in hand in Haiti. The Vodun wor-
776 shiper believes in the loa of his faith and does the things necessary to get in touch with them. These conceptions are the major part of his creed, as the corresponding actions form the bulk of his religious activity.

771 A few articles of the creed remain. "I believe in respect to twins
845 . . ." Hundreds of so-called primitive peoples see in twins some special
787 significance, now fortunate, now tragic. Many of the tribes along the Atlantic coast of Africa thought of twins as an omen, so that the presence of ritual regard for them in Haiti is hardly surprising. It is probably incorrect to speak of the worship, or the cult, of twins, for they are not deified, nor is there a common ritual for them: thousands of persons pay them no homage whatever. One family has a high regard for twins because it has numbered them among its ancestors or recent relatives; another family pays respect to all twins because a priest has advised seeking the good luck which comes from
[78] *marassa* (twins). There seems to be some confusion of thought about this aspect of religion: twins are not gods, but merely omens from the gods; yet sacrifices are made to them. Christmas and harvest are the usual seasons for the offering. Food is prepared in the morning

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

and set apart on special plates in a separate room for them; in the 171
afternoon the family eats the food. If the twins to whom homage is 845
being offered are still alive, they must wear special clothes at the 787
sacrifice. [782]

"I believe in the careful cult of the dead . . ." Once more it is 761
necessary to renew one's acquaintance with primitive and folk belief
to grasp the Haitian attitude. Life is desirable, death is dreaded; both
death and the dead are feared. In the actual world, any excursion
from the comfortably familiar countryside of one's home leads to
confusion and bewilderment. Except in the company of his fellows [166]
(on a religious pilgrimage to the waterfalls at Ville-Bonheur, for
example), a Haitian almost never leaves his valley or mountainside
and market town. Sophisticated people view the unknown with [181]
pleasurable excitement, for they have learned by experience that the
unfamiliar is not necessarily frightful; it is quite the contrary with
simple folk, whose meagre experience with the unfamiliar has been
at least somewhat alarming.

Death is the ultimate unknown. The fearsomeness the imagination conceives to lie beyond death seems to exist in almost direct proportion to people's ignorance of the material world. The fear of ghosts is a commonplace among primitive folk, as among the uneducated in the "civilized" world. Where ghosts are considered powerful, one part of any comprehensive cult will certainly deal with the dead.

In Haitian Vodun the teachings of the Catholic Church have 769
exerted more influence upon the cult of the dead than upon any other 177
part of the religion. The preparation of the corpse for burial shows
no traces of African practice; the watch (or wake) and wailing over [764]
the deceased is familiar; the funeral itself is conducted by a Catholic
priest, with burial in consecrated ground. Thereafter, the continual
efforts to secure the tranquil repose of the departed bear the earmarks
of faithful Catholic practice; it is at this point, however, that the cult
begins to assume distinctive features, for it is firmly believed that the
dead exert tremendous power in the world of the living. This power
comes from God—the Christian God. The case has been put suc-
cinctly by Sumner and Keller: "The relation between man and 114
ghost resolves itself . . . into a relation of rights and duties, with all 176
the rights on one side and all the duties on the other."[30] God gives 769

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[30] W. G. Sumner and A. G. Keller, *The Science of Society* (New Haven, 1927), II, [illegible].

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776 the dead a right to whatever their survivors possess, and moreover
769 gives them the right to return to earth as ghosts.[31]

769 Strict rules of mourning prevail, both as regards clothing and behavior. The slightest lapse in the observation of these rules would
765 cause resentment on the part of the dead; fear of retribution would
775 be quite enough to ensure conformity even if public opinion did not.
782 Ghosts have the power to possess mortals, not as the loa do at a Vodun service or dance, but in the manner understood by American Negroes who say they have been "ha'nted," and so, continually thinking of the dead, live in nervous fear of a streak of bad luck. Such possession is a form of persecution, with continual consequent bad luck until the survivor has carried out all his obligations. It is especially significant, however, that a departed spirit takes vengeance only in matters thought by the Haitian to concern the Church. The ghost is not whimsical in his possession of mortals, and cannot resent treatment which is his due. The kind of treatment given a corpse depends upon the kind of death he died: a person struck by lightning, for example, would have no ceremonies at all, for lightning is an act of God.

787 Where the cult of the dead departs entirely from the teachings of
775 the Church is in the matter of magic, a topic shortly to be treated. It
789 may be briefly stated here that ghosts can be summoned back by special adepts for purposes of divination; that certain corpses are thought to be revivified by evil persons who use these soulless, pathetic automata as slaves (these are the notorious *zombis*); and that black magic—that is, powerful influence for evil—can be worked by sorcerers who know how to command ghosts.

771 All other articles of the Vodun creed not already discussed, except one, come under the heading of magic. That exception is the state-
778 ment: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." The fact is as simple as the affirmation. If the Catholic priests fight Vodun, preaching frequently against its beliefs and practices, that is unfortunate, think the peasants: Vodun does not retaliate by fighting Catholicism. God and the saints have their province, and the loa theirs. The mind of the Haitian is simple enough to accept both sets of spiritual beings, and not philosophical enough to worry over the contradiction. Practically every Vodun worshiper thinks of himself as a Catholic.[32]

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[31] See Herskovits, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

[32] In this sketch of the Vodun creed, it has been constantly emphasized that each locality has its own variations both in belief and practice. The reader who is interested in pursuing the subject further should consult the works of Price-Mars, Herskovits, Dorsainvil, Parsons, Hurston, et al. See Bibliography.

793 Worship of the loa is directed by priests and priestesses. They grow into their positions by a kind of tolerant apprenticeship. Young men and women discover their abilities in dealing with loa or their desire to participate actively in serving them; they assist the officiating priests; they listen carefully to the lore of their elders, keeping their eyes open meanwhile. The priest is generally called a houngan, or sometimes a *papaloi;* the priestess a *mambu* or a *mamaloi.*[33] [192] No ceremony marks the progression of a novice through any set stages to final priesthood; rather, the people in the community simply recognize growing expertness. The more effective and capable a houngan, the greater his prestige and the wider his reputation. There is nothing even vaguely resembling the ordered hierarchy of priests in the Catholic Church, nor is there any control of one houngan over another. No holy robes adorn the officiants, although they occasionally wear certain colors or ornaments to please the loa. Most of the Vodun priests and priestesses are simple peasants, working in the fields and going about the daily round of life. When they are called to perform a ritual, an offering is taken up in the early part of the service to recompense them for their offices.

793 755 787 Actually, the Vodun houngan and mambu correspond much more closely to the primitive medicine man or shaman than to the Catholic priest. They are thought to have power, through certain Rada and Pétro loa, to cure illnesses caused either by adverse magic of one's enemies or by a loa; they are not able, however, to cure sickness sent by the Christian God. Likewise they can remedy or avert misfortune whose origin is magic or the loa. One of their highly important functions is foretelling the future: no important service would be contemplated by a family without previous resort to divination to determine the propitiousness of the time, nor would it be sensible to undertake a secular business of importance without preliminary reassurance by this means. To see into the future effectively, the priest must be possessed by the loa.[34]

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[33] The second of these names in each case derives from "papa" and "mama," or master and mistress; and from the familiar loa or god. It is not implied that the officiants dominate the loa but only that they deal expertly with them. [192]

[34] In addition to the houngans and mambu, there are also *bocors* who specialize in magic without conducting regular religious rites. These bocors probably deserve the name of sorcerers. [791]

4. *Magic*

771 It is difficult enough to make a distinction between religion and superstition; it is practically impossible, in dealing with a people who in their closeness to nature are not accustomed to the refinements of "civilized" thinking, to make one between magic and certain aspects of religion. Underlying both is belief in the supernatural; characteristic of both is a faith which recognizes a higher order of cause and effect operating with the lower one familiar in commonplace matters. Anthropologists hold various theories about magic, some saying that it is the set of practices out of which religion evolved, others that it exists for personal and practical ends and has little to do with religion; still others that it is a development out of religion, paralleling and complementing it.[35]

771 One element which distinguishes religious practice from magic is
the attitude toward spirits. In religion, the worshiper pays homage
789 and humbly petitions, preserving meanwhile an attitude of humility
782 to spirits or gods who must be propitiated; in magic, the human being, by coërcive words and actions, commands the services of spirits who (if the magical rites have been properly performed) must obey. The distinction is not between good and evil, for a god may have both characteristics and be entirely capable of working harm to mortals. As already noted, in the Haitian system the gods are like men in being mixtures of both principles.

771 Another difference between religion and magic concerns time.
789 Religion is social, open to all worshipers or at least to all of a group
or social rank. Its rites are continually and repeatedly performed.
796 Magic, on the contrary, though sometimes public and social, is generally private and, since it is for a specific purpose, is performed only when the need arises. A man who was thoroughly conversant with magic might go through his whole life without ever feeling the need of employing it or having to exert himself to fend it off. One turns to magic as a sophisticated man might turn to medicine. Either may be done without; both may be used to excess.

789 In Haitian Vodun, magic interweaves itself with the general faith.

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791 [35] See, for example, Ruth Benedict, "Magic," in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*,
793 X, 39–44; A. Goldenweiser, *Early Civilization* (New York, 1922), chaps. X–XI; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1907–15), *passim;* R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion* (New York, 1914), *passim;* and Sumner and Keller, *op. cit.*, II, chaps. XXIX–XXXI.

Everyone believes in it, though few would make nice distinctions 789
between the two. Starting with extremes, the houngan conducting a 793
service with sacrifice is officiating at a purely religious rite, while the 791
bocor (sorcerer) concocting a love charm is dealing wholly in magic. It is perfectly proper, however, for a respectable houngan to brew a mixture, calling on the loa meanwhile for assistance, to cure a sick person: is this magic? Certainly it is private, specific, practical. A respectable houngan will not permit himself to dabble in evil magic, destined to bring misfortune to someone else;[36] but such work is the stock in trade of the bocor, who knows the dangers of his profession yet is willing to run the risk for the sake of high profit. Between the reputable houngan and the awesome bocor may sometimes be found the *caplata*, a sort of jack-of-all-trades, who professes to be able to achieve whatever is demanded of him in magic, whether beneficial or harmful, but whose reputation is not high enough to make men trust him with important magical enterprises.

There exists one continual check to save the gullible from charlatanism on the part of the practitioner: 789
the performer of any kind of 791
magic must make frequent exhibitions of his powers. If the specialist cannot make his magic work, he soon loses his reputation. The career of magic is not one to be entered lightly. Constant search for medicinal plants, constant experimentation, comparison of practice—the requirements of the profession are as strenuous as those for the successful American doctor. Magic is like a live wire: it cannot be handled with impunity. The slightest slip on the part of the bocor might loose divine wrath on the bungler and quack. It is said that almost every bocor dies an evil death, hoist on his own petard. For the houngan the risk is not so great, since in general he relies upon the might of his own special loa, who of old has been familiar with him. True, he may run the risk of purchasing the services of other loa, but it is a risk, since his family loa, quick to feel insult, might punish him.

Magic runs the gamut from passive to active, simple to complex. 789
The commonest manifestation of magic in Haitian daily life is one
familiar to most peoples in the world—the charm. [171]
As in Italy and other southern European countries, the Haitian peasant believes in the evil eye. "Maldioque," it is called—a term not far removed from the Italian "*mal occhio.*" The common belief is that certain persons,

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[36] This is commonly called "black" magic.

789 generally through no wish of their own, have the uncanny ability to cause evil simply by a glance. One look is enough to do the damage. Although theory is a bit vague on this point, it appears that certain irritable spirits use the agency of the human eye to vent their spleen on mortals who are fortunate: good looks and strokes of luck act, consequently, as lodestones to the fateful glance. And where the [175] glance falls ill luck may spread, harming all within reach. In the days [304] of slavery people had such a fear of the evil eye that they did not hesitate to disfigure infants who at birth seemed to be particularly handsome and so likely to attract attention. Nowadays the practice 777 is to avert the glance by making an *arrêt*. This "halt" may be either a 789 special charm worn on the person or else the mark of a half-moon done with a caustic vegetable substance on the cheek. As with Europeans who believe in the evil eye, certain specialists ply a lucrative trade through their reputation for effective charms against the maldioque.

Other charms may be mentioned. There is the *garde* which protects its wearer against evil of any variety—the near relative of the good-luck charm worn by thousands of "civilized" people. There is the *ouanga*, or *wanga*, compounded to achieve a special end, generally an evil one. Faine remarks that ouanga is

> [192] A Créole word of African origin [signifying] a philtre or simple of a special kind, compounded by an *houngan* out of such diverse ingredients as a dead chicken, some grains of indigo and maize, amulets, pieces of money, asafoetida, etc., the whole contained in a half-calabash. . . . The Ouanga, placed in the home of an enemy, is designed to bring him bad luck even to the extent of giving him elephantiasis ("gros pied") when he has inadvertently stepped on the ouanga.[37]

The ouanga is the Haitian equivalent of the hoodoo, for through its influence one may (or so he believes) bring illness, misfortune, or death to an enemy. For every ouanga there is a garde, for every evil a cure. The art lies in finding out the nature of the ouanga causing harm, and then knowing exactly what to do to fend it off.

751 Historically the most interesting garde is that called a *drogue*, 789 which is thought to insulate one against wound by weapons or bullets. Reference has already been made to the utter abandon with which the Negroes, both at the time of the insurrection and later in

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[37] Jules Faine, *Philologie Créole* (Port-au-Prince, 1937), p. 319.

the struggle for independence, threw themselves against the formi- 789
dable weapons of the whites. Whenever in spite of the drogue a man
was wounded, there was always the explanation of other potent 751
magic, never a surrender of the belief in drogues. Tradition has it that Christophe wore a drogue giving him immunity against all but silver bullets, and that he kept a silver bullet for suicide in case the need should arise—as it did. Drogues were worn by the caco guerrillas, active from 1919 to 1922, who harassed the Marines during the Occupation of the country.

Such forms of magic are found among practically every known folk. There are traces of charms in the folklore of most "civilized" people, as well as in actual, if secret, use by many apparent sophisticates.

The next commonest application of magic has to do with disease. 759
Haiti is a poor and prevailingly illiterate country in which there are 164
not enough trained medical doctors to serve adequately even the
small population of the towns. People who live in the secluded 758
valleys and on the mountainsides receive practically no medical attention. The disease rate if accurate figures could be obtained would certainly be shockingly high, with hookworm and malaria all but universal, and yaws, elephantiasis, and tuberculosis common. In the case of disease and its treatment, it is fair to say that the Haitian peasant is typically primitive.

Sickness is thought to be caused either as a punishment or a warn- 753
ing by one of the loa, or by evil magic wrought by one's enemies.
When a man falls ill, therefore, he sends for the specialist, whether 755
houngan, bocor, or caplata, to discover the responsible loa; next, he must learn whether the loa is angry with him, and if so, for what reason; if it is found that the loa is acting through magical compulsion of an enemy, the treatment of the disease will be different from the case of a loa acting without human compulsion. An angry spirit can be appeased by proper sacrifices; a spirit acting as an agent of evil magic must be fought by another spirit, compelled by the countermagic of the patient's specialist. Sometimes the countermagic is simple exorcism by spells and incantations. At other times it is highly involved and dangerous, requiring exotic plants, continuous attention, even illegal practices such as mutilating a corpse. Casual observation might fail to detect the magical element in some of the operations, for they resemble merely the brews or applications of old wives' tales.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

755 Specialists in the magic of healing sometimes hit upon remarkable remedies, just as those who concentrate upon causing ailments learn the most effective ways of poisoning a victim's body or, by suggestion, of ruining his peace of mind. In the soil of infinite belief in spiritual powers the seeds of suspicion take firm root.

754 776 From the realm of recognized magic in which most natives at one time or another indulge, one crosses the threshold into a world of sorcery, perversion, and evil mystery. Here no normal person walks, for it is perilous ground. Here is no illumination from any loa or saint, but a grisly darkness coming down by tradition through centuries of whispered fear. From European folklore by way of French storytellers the Haitian peasant has taken the idea of the werewolf, whom he conceives always to be feminine. The male counterpart is [266] the demon. These creatures are men and women who have a passion for eating human flesh and drinking human blood; cannibalism being abhorrent to normal persons, these abnormal ones through the blackest of magic are believed to be able to transform themselves into werewolves and demons, in which shape they glut themselves before effecting the change once more into human form. One does well to beware of persons with red eyes or black spots in the corner of the eye: these are the telltale marks of the cannibalistically inclined. No accredited ethnographer has ever received a direct report of encounter with werewolves or demons, but the haunting fear is present among the people. There is always an old man who lives in the next valley who has definite knowledge of them, and there are bocors who are "well known" to be able to give this vile power of lycanthropy to people. A person particularly afraid of werewolves will wear a special garde to ward off this evil.

754 776 From Africa comes the belief in the *baka*, an evil spirit who has a family resemblance to former Christian notions of the devil. The baka will make a bargain with a man, giving him some special power or greatly desired boon in return for the life of a member of his family. The bargain seems always to be cumulative, so that the mortal is never out of debt. When first one member of a family dies, and then a second and a third, the family is sure to consult a houngan in order to discover whether such an engagement exists. The knowledge apparently does little good, for the baka is always there at the appointed hour, mowing down one member after another until finally the bargainer himself is killed. One might wonder, since it is

generally believed that the compact always results fatally for the man 754
who makes it, why anyone should enter into such an engagement. 776
Craving for money or some other immediate form of power, however, bedims the reason; in the face of all-consuming desire, more than one man has been willing to ignore future pain for present reward.

It would be possible to conjure up a whole phantasmagoria of 789
weird belief in connection with magic, although this would be unjust to the character of the Haitians. These people have their share of dire concepts, but no more than might be expected of a simple folk. One final magical belief must be treated, however, for it has reached the ears of the outside world in grim detail. This is the belief [114]
in the *zombi*. The word, as Faine explains, comes from the Bonda [192]
language of Africa (*zumbi* there), and was probably transmitted to Haiti by Portuguese slave traders. Faine continues:

> Zombi . . . designates in general a revenant, a phantom, an otherworldly 114
> spirit. In popular belief, certain sorcerers have the power, by means of 754
> charms and spells, to cause apparent death to individuals and then to bring them back to life again, even after they have been buried. These resuscitated persons, only half-conscious, are then, isolated in distant parts of the country, utilized for field work. Nourished on food from which salt is rigorously excluded, they are thought to be able to regain their natural senses and all their mental faculties if they taste the least grain of this substance. Such legends, circumstantially garbed and presented as actual facts by certain unscrupulous authors, have served as the theme of books which have made a great commotion in foreign countries. Taking advantage of the credulity of a public avid for exotic matters, for mysteries, for the supernatural, these writers have gained, in certain cases, the greatest success of publicity.[38]

Three attitudes are taken in regard to the zombi. There are skep- 754
tics who deny the existence of zombis altogether, setting down as fable most of the ideas current about them, and as mistaken diagnosis all the remainder. There are the credulous (including practically every peasant) who believe in and quite directly fear this potential fate. And there are those who believe that certain bocors know how to administer a subtle poison to intended victims which will cause suspended animation and give the appearance of death. Men in the prime of life suddenly sicken and die for no apparent reason. Once these pseudo-corpses are safely buried, the sinister person who has

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[38] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

754 arranged the "death" will hasten to the graveyard and dig up the body; giving the proper antidote to the poison, he restores the body to activity but the mind only to semiconsciousness. In this subnormal state the victim is taken off to some remote valley where, in company with other zombis, he is made to work as a slave. Physical strength is there, but no mind with which to rebel, to ask for pay, to recognize the full extent of his sorry state.[39]

114 754 Zora Neale Hurston is the only foreigner who states that she has definitely seen a zombi. In her book, *Tell My Horse,* she describes the woman who had been a zombi and includes a picture of her.[40] The reader cannot suppress a query as to whether the supposed zombi might not have suffered simply from a special kind of insanity. Miss Hurston tells very graphically the peasant tales of "dead" persons made into zombis: of parents, husbands, and wives who have seen and clung to their recent relatives without the slightest responding sign of recognition, of men who are known to have zombis in their employ.

754 766 When a person has died a sudden death without apparent cause, a houngan will very likely be called to try to discover the malefactor, although it is not believed that he will be able to bring back to life the "dead" person. In cases where sudden death is regarded as suspicious, the survivors often see to it that the apparent corpse becomes a real one by plunging a knife into the heart or by cutting out some vital part, in order to spare the corpse the degradation of a zombi's slavery. Or families lacking the courage to mutilate a corpse will watch at the grave until it is certain that the body has begun to putrefy and real death has succeeded to the simulation. Once actual death has come, of course, the malefactor is thwarted and prevented from capitalizing on his evil work.

754 In a mental atmosphere of credulity, coincidence often makes magic seem to work. Belief gives power to the charm or rite. A person aware that a spell is cast upon him will sicken and die because he believes so firmly in the efficacy of the magic. A curse will be

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[114] [39] In support of this theory of a poison which produces stupor, Seabrook, *op. cit.*, p. 335, cites the French text of the Code Pénal, Article 249, as follows: "*Est aussi qualifié attentat à la vie d'une personne, l'emploi qui sera fait contre elle de substances qui, sans donner la mort, produisent un effet léthargique plus ou moins prolongé, de quelque manière que ces substances aient administrés, quelles qu'en aient été les suites. Si par suite de cet état léthargique la personne a été inhumée, l'attentat sera qualifié assassinat.*"

[40] Pp. 189–209.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

pronounced; later the lightning will strike, the disease will come, the child will die: the connection between curse and calamity will seem too obvious for contradiction. About certain persons is a look (some call it an aura) of evil which is almost palpable: folk belief has an explanation. For much of the mysterious coincidence in life a sophisticate will simply shrug his shoulders and attempt no explanation; he accepts his doctor's diagnosis or his lawyer's advice, and when these betray him falls back upon the many insurances of civilization. The Haitian needs an explanation for his ills, for he lacks doctors, lawyers, insurance: the explanation of magic may be incorrect, but it is the only one he has and it is backed up by events often enough to seem true. 754

Life is full of mishaps. The Haitian's loa are as real to him as the mountains and trees of his country. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that the peasant thinks his loa directly responsible for much of the evil that befalls. In this explanation the Haitian is not different from millions of other people, even Christians. It would, however, be a great mistake to emphasize the fear in Vodun faith and in the magic which proceeds from it to such an extent that the bright side is forgotten. The gods are likewise responsible for the good luck of mankind. If a man deeply desires to attain a specific good, there is room in both religion and magic for that also. It may be the love of a girl, money to pay a debt, a propitious day for holding a *coumbite* (or coöperative working bee), the birth of a son instead of a daughter: religion and magic avail for all of these, more with some individuals than with others. When an entire community holds a belief, the magic has a double chance of working. It is easier for a man to win his wife if she knows he is working magic to that end, than to persuade her without magic. This kind of magic is also easier to work than that which depends wholly upon the complaisance of the loa, as when rain is needed for crops at the proper time. 776 789 771

Religion, with its sister magic, is not for the Haitian a matter of special days, vague abstractions, or formal propriety. It is a daily strength for daily needs. 771

VIII

RELIGIOUS BORROWINGS

771 ROMAN Catholicism in Haiti is, as we have seen, the officially approved, socially proper, and outwardly recognized religion. Vodun, on the contrary, is legislated against and driven into the background by the élite who are ashamed to have foreigners see the power in their country of a folk religion which has its crude side. These two are Haiti's faiths.

794 No one takes a census in Haiti, for the peasants have their suspicions of officials who pry into personal affairs. There is consequently no way of knowing precisely how many Haitians regard themselves as "belonging" to the Catholic Church. The priests list the whole population of a diocese as Catholic. In so doing they are probably not far wrong, for although not every person gets to confession each year or attends to his other religious duties, certainly nineteen out of twenty Haitians, élite and common folk alike, would claim to be Catholics. On the whole, it may be that the simple people are more sincere in this, for they are not touched with skepticism where things spiritual are concerned.

771 In the United States censuses of religious bodies, if an individual is
171 listed as a member of one denomination he cannot be listed as a member of another. We are trained to religious exclusiveness: we are *either* Baptists *or* Methodists, Jews *or* Catholics. Not every people, however, has schooled itself to such sharp distinctions. The Japanese Buddhist may regard himself as a worshiper of Shinto as well; the Chinese can be Taoist and Confucian at the same time. By our rigidity we deny ourselves a great deal of inner comfort: I may like the earnest fervor of the Missionary Baptists but like as well the stately ritual of Anglo-Catholicism; I must accept one or the other, however, for if I am a member of the former sect I cannot at the same time be admitted to all the rights and privileges of the latter. There is probably a spiritual compensation resulting from such single-minded allegiance, but we are frequently forced to deny

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validity to forms and ideas which we know, in our hearts, might 771
sustain us.[1]

The Haitian peasant is not interested in making formal distinctions. 771
If he is critical, it is only of results, rarely of the means used to obtain
those results. If he cannot gain his ends in one way he is not too
proud to try another, and still a third. Nineteen out of twenty
Haitians, then, being Roman Catholics in religion, are likewise worshipers of Vodun. There is so much mystery in the world, so much
misfortune, beauty, sorrow, and joy that it would be unthinkable to
deny God or the gods: mankind has worship enough for them all,
and need enough of them all. There is to the peasant no conflict [798]
between Vodun and Catholicism; the two are complementary, even
if sometimes the Catholic priests make coöperation impossible.

Let us recall for a moment the earlier history of the country. In 175
the days of slavery one may imagine the Church would have found 177
it difficult, even if its priests and planters had been willing, to train 771
all the blacks as thorough Catholics. Some concepts took root, some
rites immediately appealed. Below the surface, however, the African 794
ideas of the preponderant Dahomeans were spreading through the
plantations. In the crucial early days of independence, when the
customs and social institutions of the Haitians (as Haitians, not as
expatriate slaves) were in process of formation, the country's rulers
were not deeply religious; moreover the State was in open schism
from the Church. For fifty-five years no approved churchman was
at work with the people. The seventy men whom some historians
mention as priests were on the whole venal and self-seeking, even
vicious. Their least concern was to wean the people away from their
superstitions, for precisely in these folk beliefs lay the greatest source
of gain. By the time the breach between State and Church was healed
it was too late to make single-minded Catholics of the Haitian
peasants. They would accept what the new and active priests taught
them, but not to the exclusion of what they had believed for a century.

With the élite the Church has had more success; assiduous teach- 565

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[1] This either-or dichotomy is not limited to religion: we divide ourselves similarly 771
in politics, family life, residence, and so on. If I am a Lutheran, a Republican, a married
man with a home in New York, I cannot at the same time be an Episcopalian, a
Democrat, and a voter in Chicago with a second spouse and family there. What is
impossible and ridiculous for Americans, however, is in some ways the normal course
of life for the Haitian.

565 ing since 1860 has had its effect upon the children of the upper classes.
771 Two hundred churchmen working with a population of more than two million cannot distribute their benefits equally. Teachers must devote themselves to those whose minds are educable, who have access to schools, and who can afford time for daily classes. An element of social snobbishness entered as well. Catholicism was socially accepted in the Western World whose approval the élite coveted, where Vodun if known at all was regarded as a mere superstition. To prove his separation from the peasant black, the élite person was therefore Catholic or nothing.

[797] It would have required many times two hundred teaching brothers and sisters, all with the zeal of fanatics and the energy of dynamos, to convert the masses away from Vodun. In acquainting the peasants with Church forms and certain beliefs the priests have been entirely successful; in making exclusive Catholics of them they have had no success at all.

771 Every vital social institution is continually in a process of change.
177 Vodun, a very living faith, has steadily borrowed more and more from Catholicism, the only other religion with which the people come in close contact. When one can go from a Saturday night Vodun sacrifice and dance to a Sunday morning Catholic Mass with no feeling of incongruity, it is obvious that the minds of the worshipers are actively predisposed to assimilation of creed and ritual.

796 We have suggested in a previous chapter some traces of the Catholic Mass in Vodun ceremony. The Vodun service regularly begins with a long ritual which the observer who knows both the Créole language and the Catholic liturgy recognizes as being almost entirely Roman. While the Vodun houngan sits quietly by, a special officiant known as the *prêt' savanne* (bush priest) reads or pretends to read from the Catholic prayer book. For the Pater Noster, the creed, the Ave Maria, the Salve Regina, and the prayers, the worshipers kneel or stand as they would in church. Candles burn, water is sprinkled, the sign of the cross is made, the chants are sung. When the benediction completes this part of the service, the houngan takes over to conduct the purely African rites; yet his first words are, "*Grâce mise'-corde,*" and many Catholic interpolations appear even in this second part of the service.

[778] The Vodun ritual is conducted before an altar, in Haitian Créole
[192] called a "trône," which is a perfect marriage between Vodun and

Catholicism. I have seen such an altar, with its adjacent table, bearing 796
a crucifix, candles, (holy) water, lithographs of the "Assumption of [778]
the Virgin," "St. George and the Dragon," the "Adoration of the [192]
Kings," and certain unrecognized but distinctly European saints; in addition to these objects, however, were such unecclesiastical articles as bananas, rice, beans, squash, various bottles of drinks, and plates of food. Near by were the sacrificial animals.

Vodun makes use frequently of one sacrament of the Church— [777]
baptism. Needless to say, this rite is not a monopoly of Christianity, and its use in the folk religion may very well have come from Africa. Constant witnessing of the rite in church must nevertheless have influenced its adoption for all important Vodun ceremonials. The drums used in the dance are baptized; so also is the first loa to possess a devotee; at many other special times the rite is likewise performed, generally with a set of prayers which invoke Catholic saints and Vodun loa alike.

Mention has already been made of the identification of Rada and 776
Pétro loa with certain saints and martyrs of the Church. Such identi- 177
fications are not uniform, but vary in different parts of the country. [184]
Legba is generally associated with Saint Anthony, but often (and to the Christian, more understandably) with Saint Peter who traditionally guards the gates of heaven; the Virgin Mary quite obviously is related, whether as Queen of Heaven, as the Sorrowing Mother, or as the innocent Virgin, with numerous manifestations of Maîtresse Erzulie; Damballa, whose symbol is the serpent, is sometimes Moses (whose brother's rod became a serpent consuming other serpents, and who by lifting up a serpent in the wilderness cured the people of their snake bites) and sometimes Saint Patrick (whose association with snakes is well known). Other identifications are numerous, showing the penchant of the people for combining what they know of both religions.[2]

Many of the loa have, like the Catholic saints, their symbols, their special days, colors, and other associations. Some like white, some red; the serpent, the rainbow, the crossroads are among the symbols; sacred days occur weekly, Tuesday being Legba's, Wednesday Ogun's, Friday Erzulie's, and Saturday Baron Samedi's. It may be

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[2] The distinguished Haitian ethnographer, sociologist, and historian, Dr. Jean Price-Mars, has made a list of some of these identifications in his *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, pp. 180–181.

776 777 that Catholic practice in these matters did no more than to fortify an African tendency already in evidence; indeed, it is a common tendency of folk religions anywhere to associate days and colors with their honored spirits. The very similarity of conventions indicates the ease with which borrowing of religious ideas might occur.

778 Every Catholic priest is well aware of the hold Vodun has upon the people, just as all desire to see the ultimate triumph of the Church. The battle is unending, but the method of attack varies. Open firmness is the approach favored by some priests, subtle indirection by others. Sermons against Vodun do little good apparently, for the faith of the worshipers is sufficient to maintain in their own minds the validity of what the preachers inveigh against. When zealous clerics cut down trees sacred to Damballa or try otherwise to eradicate signs and symbols of the loa, the people have rarely tried to stop them; but when the slightest bad luck comes to the iconoclasts—and misfortune comes to every man sooner or later—the people are quick to interpret the stroke as the loa's punishment for the desecration of holy things. On one occasion a shrine was destroyed, the priest calling in an American officer to shoot at a supposed apparition of the Virgin: shortly thereafter the priest's house was burned to the ground, the priest himself suffered a paralytic stroke from which he never recovered, and the captain was ordered back to the United States, "as a punishment for what he had done," said the people. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc*—what followed was a direct consequence of what had gone before; this has been the basis of belief from time immemorial. Who shall say it was not cause and effect? Similar cases have been numerous. One concludes that the method of direct assault will never achieve its purpose.

Subtlety of attack, on the other hand, requires infinite patience, infinite willingness to compromise for the present. Both are qualities which the Catholic Church has amply demonstrated in times past. Certain of the priests whose parishes include country districts are masters in the art of patient indirection, willing to accept apparent failure in their lifetime in the hope of ultimate victory for the Church. Their method is to discover which Vodun practices are of prime importance and, ignoring minor beliefs and practices, slowly lure—not intellectually persuade—the people away from them. This process may be clearly illustrated by a service in the hills in 1937.

A Catholic chapel had been erected in recent years upon a hilltop

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

A Catholic chapel had been erected in recent years upon a hilltop

long respected as a favorite haunt of the loa Damballa. Apparently 798
this was no slight, for Vodun gods are not monopolistic. On the hill, 796
however, once stood a tree in which a snake made his home, symbol
of Damballa. Many years earlier a forthright Catholic priest had ordered 177 his parishioners to fell the tree, an insult direct to the loa which none of the faithful dared give. The determined cleric therefore performed the task himself, but left a sizable stump on which has now been placed a small statue of the popular Catholic Saint Anthony.

The feast day was well attended, and while the Mass and sermon were proceeding in the crowded chapel dozens of men and women who could not get into the building, or who preferred not to try, remained outside. Many were simply standing about in groups, chatting; others were more significantly engaged. Some kneeled before the tree stump at whose foot many candles were burning; there, as at a shrine, they prayed. Were their prayers Catholic petitions to Saint Anthony or Vodun prayers to Damballa? At another corner of the church under the shade of a tree sat a venerable woman dispensing a liquid concoction, which seemed particularly popular with the women and children. Holding out their hands they received a palmful each of the syrupy substance, which they then smeared upon their bodies; on the eyes or face, on their legs, or on more private parts. The Catholic priest later explained the liquid as a "Voodoo brew," and again as a charm; more accurately, it was a garde to turn away illness from the parts of the body rubbed with it.

The officiating priest knew perfectly well that not all the candles burning at the tree stump were for Saint Anthony; he was also aware of the woman dispensing her liquid, yet took no steps to stop her. He assumed that with the small statue of Saint Anthony on the stump, there were already children growing up unaware of Damballa's connection with the place. He hoped to find money for a larger, more imposing statue so that as generations passed the memory of the loa, as related to worship on this hill, would be supplanted. As for the woman, why bother to drive her away? It would merely cause antagonism, and would certainly not stop the practice. Her being there might draw a few more peasants to the feast, where they would have an opportunity to learn the true Word.

As soon as the Mass in the chapel was finished, the people poured out and began to form a line of march. Headed by the priest the whole congregation, including many who had not penetrated to the

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

798 chapel, wended their way down the hill and across to a clearing
796 among the trees. On the way many of the women stopped beside
the path to pluck a handful of long grass or reached up to break
177 twigs from the smaller trees. At the clearing, primitively decorated with colored cloth, the priest made a short discourse; then he intoned three times, "Notre Dame d'Alta Gracia," and the worshipers, raising their wisps of greenery above their heads, rustled the twigs until the air was filled with a sound like the hissing of many serpents. "*Priez pour nous!*" they responded each time to the rustling accompaniment. The Virgin of Alta Gracia is the miraculous saint of Higuey, as much renowned among Haitians as among the Spanish-speaking Dominicans farther east. The supplication to the Virgin is proper enough to a Catholic feast, but the hissing, reminiscent of Damballa, is an intimation that the Vodun loa is not yet forgotten on his holy hill.

This festival of Notre Dame d'Alta Gracia shows not only the adaptability of Catholicism to Vodun, but likewise that of Vodun to Catholicism. Not even with the will to preserve their faith and practice pure can most men resist the infiltration of surrounding beliefs; in Haiti, the will to resist is itself lacking. This the Church knows, and counts upon for ultimate victory. In other words, there is to be not precisely a conversion of worshipers away from Vodun, but a slow transformation of Vodun itself into a true Catholic faith within the hearts of the people.

In its long experience in adaptability, the Church has in many a country learned to establish a ground of common understanding with lowly folk, while keeping its touch with aristocrats. Following the principle that where a belief or rite is apparently ineradicable it is advisable to turn it to Catholic uses, the Church in Haiti has often made this kind of adjustment, just as in earlier times with the Aztecs, Mayans, and other continental American Indians. An example of it may be observed at Saut d'Eau, near Ville-Bonheur.

787 Here, near the centre of Haiti, in 1884 there appeared in a palm
775 tree the vision of a beautiful Virgin blessing the people. She re-
mained so long that according to tradition the whole countryside
795 saw her. The parish priest, unwilling to permit this obsession of the people to continue, came to drive away the apparition. The Virgin departed, apparently of her own will. People saw her no more, but many came to the palm tree and were miraculously cured and

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

marvelously aided in distress. The priest, not willing to allow even 787
this "delusion," tried to cut down the tree but was wounded by his 778
own machete. Eventually, however, the tree was destroyed by 798
natural causes, and a church erected on the site. Fire destroyed the
church. Each successive church building has likewise been destroyed,
by fire or by lightning. No longer now does the Catholic Church
combat the sanctity of Saut d'Eau: after all, it was the Virgin who
appeared, not a loa. The great celebrations on every fifteenth of [796]
July draw pilgrims from all over Haiti. Although the Church now
grudgingly approves the feast it is still recognizably Vodun in
character, for devout souls who bathe in the water are "mounted" by
loa. The Church has a hard battle ahead of it to win this festival for
Catholicism.

Three factors work in favor of the Catholic struggle to win 771
Haitians completely away from Vodun: the world-wide organization 177
of the Church, which can always throw trained reserves into the 798
battle; the superior intellectual equipment of the priests, enabling
them to plan their campaign and use psychological weapons; and [795]
the plasticity of Vodun itself, which is a conglomeration of human
feelings, ideas, and traditions rather than a rigid sect with an inflexible ritual.[3] Even with these advantages, it is still the battle of a
few dozen men on one side with the Haitian masses (more than two
million) on the other. So far as one is ever justified in prophecy, it
seems safe to assume that Vodun will continue to assimilate more
and more fragments of Catholicism; that its appeal will remain so
long as education and medicine are not extended to the whole
countryside; that eventually—it may be centuries hence—Vodun
rites may sink back into the status of living folklore, to which the
simple turn in their deepest need.

One of the strongest missionary advantages of the Roman Catholic [795]
Church has been the breadth given it by two thousand years of
experience. In so long a life it has had to be all things to all men; out [797]
of necessity it has developed around the central core so wide a
variety of belief, doctrine, form, and traditional practice, that there is
something for every believer, whether scholarly or untutored,
powerfully important or humbly obscure. What the cultivated ~~798~~

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[3] The absence of any written formulation of Vodun must certainly be a factor in its flexibility. Recorded tradition and written history tend to create definiteness of pattern. [771]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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WHAT THE CULTIVATED

77/ member of the Haitian élite takes from Catholicism is quite different
177 probably from what the peasant absorbs: the point is that the peasant
[184] does not find the faith either incomprehensible, or uncongenial to his own tradition and penchants—as he might find the tenets of, say, Unitarianism or Presbyterianism. It is easy to fit the Trinity, the Virgin, the saints, the Mass, holy water, Lent, and practically every other external aspect of belief and ritual into his mental set. He makes his own selection and his own reconciliations. It seems the most natural thing in the world to him to light a candle and make the sign of the cross as he baptizes a new drum for use in the Vodun dance. The Haitian peasant, in fact, makes a tranquil unity of his two religions, to match the obvious oneness of his universe.

[p. 175]

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PART III

SEX RELATIONS AND HOME LIFE

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3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

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IX

HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

TOLERANT understanding of the ways of alien people is rare in matters relating to sex. Occasionally we may regard marital and sexual practices which differ from our own as amusing or ridiculous; more frequently we find them distasteful and disgusting. A long religious heritage has implanted in us a definite personal morality, familiar in Puritanism and in the codes of the great majority of early American pioneers. Accompanying and dominated by this religious aspect has been the legal idea of sexual morality. A middle-class tradition of private property, hence of orderly marriages legally recognized, has schooled us for centuries to approve certain moral and sexual rules: monogamic marriage, children born in wedlock, a public wedding ceremony by approved authorities, censure of sexual relations which might confuse the passage of property. Although sympathetic tolerance for foreign ways has never been an outstanding American characteristic, it is least evident in connection with divergent sexual practices. We do not remind ourselves of the utilitarian basis of a part of our own sexual codes.

Where people have economic and social backgrounds different 577
from those of Western Europe and the United States, other codes 171
will prevail. Elements which have made American moral standards
what they are were lacking or appeared in different form in Haiti. 831
Instead of middle-class European tradition there was African tribal practice; instead of diffused small private properties there was slavery; instead of the Puritan notion that sex relations were in general sinful was the less rigorous view that sexual intercourse was entirely normal; instead of the example of monogamous family life constantly before the minds of children growing up, there was the example of libertinage among lofty whites and laxness among the blacks.

Nothing in the experience of the slave régime could have predis- 175
posed toward orderly marriage these people, soon to become Hai-
tians. Certain masters actually prohibited weddings among their 567
slaves, while most others discouraged it, since the development of 581
family ties among the blacks would only have made for complication

175 when slaves were to be sold. Even when whole families were brought
567 over together from Africa, it was considered discreet in Saint-
581 Domingue to separate the various members at the slave market, so that there would be little chance of combinations and intrigues.
[794] Theoretically the Church was in favor of regular marriages between slave men and women, but even if the Africans had understood or desired the "sacrament," the opposition of the white planters would have been enough to curb missionary insistence on this point; the Jesuits had already been expelled from the colony for their too great zeal in plantation reforms.

175 As a usual thing, then, slaves simply cohabited. It was not against
567 the rules of a plantation for a slave and the woman with whom he consorted to live together in a slave hut with the children born to
588 them; but neither was it against the rules for the overseer to put
[843] other slaves into the same hut, or to sell promising slave children as if they were cattle.[1] Little was done to prevent sex relations between slaves, although masters had varying attitudes toward the results of these relations: some planters welcomed births as a stockbreeder welcomes additions to his herd; others resented the pregnancy of slave women as an obstacle to necessary field work. In the former case, a planter's capital was increased; in the latter, abortions resulted when the overseer drove pregnant women to hard work under the tropical sun.

175 The freedom of the planters with the persons of their attractive
567 female slaves likewise weakened any tendency toward monogamous family life as conceived by bourgeois European society. The relation-
588 ship between master and slave woman was momentary. Not often was a woman so beguiling that she could be called a concubine; still less often was she a mistress. The latter estate was the height of any female slave's worldly ambition, for not only might she then be freed, but she could live a life of leisure. In rare cases she might hope to persuade her white paramour into marriage. Almost certainly her mulatto children would be free.

175 In so far as there was any predisposition toward strict observance of
565 European marriage practices, it was most clearly exhibited by the
581 group of affranchis. As freedmen they were intent upon establishing

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[567] [1] Under exceptional circumstances slaves found themselves under a benevolent,
[581] religious master who allowed them to be married by a priest and thereafter to live together as a family.

175 565 581 themselves and their families economically and socially. Property was important, so they took pains to insure the legitimacy of their heirs; color was crucial, and so they regulated the marriages of their children to be sure there was no reversion to the black strain. They guarded their fortunes solicitously, provided their daughters with dowries large enough sometimes even to lure a white husband, educated their sons in Paris—behaved, in short, as if they had been pillars of society in provincial France. Like the white planters, the male affranchis often had relations with slave women, but even more rarely than whites were they seduced into marriage with women of the lower orders.

175 581 When the slave insurrection and its aftermath freed the half-million blacks in Saint-Domingue it was not to be expected that European middle-class morals and practices should suddenly prevail. Modern usage emerges from the womb of tradition. Neither in Africa nor in the colony had tradition taught the blacks respect for monogamy or for marriage entered into by religious ceremony. [583] If the ex-slaves had reverted to their Dahomean, Congolese, or other African background, they might have introduced the bride price; but to pay a bride price is to assume the existence of wealth, an assumption contrary to fact among the ex-slaves in Saint-Domingue of the 1790's, and Haiti of the 1800's. [585] In neither Dahomey nor the Congo was there much ceremony at the union of a couple; what there was consisted mostly of singing and dancing. If, on the other hand, the people went only by what they had observed in slave days, there was no tradition of binding union or strict codes, as we understand them. [837] A man knew when to stay away from another man's woman; [855] children remained near their mother—these two statements almost cover the situation as of 1796 among the newly freed slaves.

175 643 788 582 Toussaint, apparently a conventional person in what concerned social behavior, wished his people to be "moral." He instituted a time of "holy masses, mystic communions, biblical psalms, and divine ecstasies"[2] for his private edification, and recommended the same for his people. He could not possibly have instilled into them a desire for Christian marriage, however; even if he could, priests would not have been available for the wholesale marrying of scores of thousands of men and women. Local records of weddings at this period are very scanty.

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[2] Saint-Rémy, *Pétion et Haïti*, III, 93.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

The truth is, marriage and moral conditions differ from economic and political conditions in that they are not so immediate and pressing in their effect upon individual lives. If these are not attended to today, tomorrow will find our bellies empty and our state overrun by enemies. But sex relations go on willy-nilly, and children are born into families: there will still be marriage and a moral problem to
175 attend to when order has been brought into practical affairs. Tous-
643 saint was involved in a diplomatic battle in which the participants were the best minds of France, England, and the United States.
648 Beside these mighty problems upon which depended the economic and political future of his people, the question of a standard of sex
831 conduct was definitely secondary.

So it must have seemed to Dessalines, the founder of the state and
175 first "law-giver" of Haiti. By his official actions it is evident that the
643 economy of the country was his primary concern, with defense
831 against a return of the French a close second. In his pronouncements he bowed respectfully to religion and then postponed action until some more convenient season. He pronounced likewise some very proper sentiments on marriage and morals, calling attention to the benefits of wedlock, piously deprecating sensuality and voluptuous-
[582] ness. His imperial constitution of 1805 encouraged lawful unions, treating marriage as a socially virtuous state to be cultivated.

This was all words, however, and came strangely from the black
175 general who was, as everyone knew, a notorious libertine. He lec-
643 tured his people on the danger of yielding to their passions, yet
159 showed no intention of controlling his own impulses or those of his
831 favorites. He was, indeed, the last man in Haiti to make a gesture toward sexual morality among the people, for although he was married his daily life was a complete negation of moral precept. In every town he habitually visited he established mistresses, bestowing large sums of money upon them. He employed every sort of seduction, honor, and gift to conquer the virtue of females who valued their "respectability." Actually, he did not often need to use violence, for the prevailing moral tone was not so high but that most young and attractive women would yield to their Emperor.

114 The sternly upright Haitian historian, Madiou, has a formidable
643 paragraph on the vices of Dessalines. He tries partially to excuse him
159 on the grounds of his fury at discovering conspiracies against his
831 authority among his colored lieutenants, asserting that his early gen-

erosity and equity now gave way to malevolence and personal license: 114

> Putting no restraint upon his passions, he travelled about, followed by 643
> actors, dancers, musicians, and courtesans. An indefatigable dancer, as soon 159
> as he arrived in a place he gave a ball. Under Toussaint Louverture, in 831
> order to please the Governor-General everyone approached the holy altar; under Dessalines one gained glory by dancing well. The Emperor, giving himself up to scandalous pleasures, forgot that he was head of the state. The greatest immorality reigned about him. With a gaiety sometimes grotesque, he told the ladies who frequented his court how much he admired their beauty, no matter how ugly they actually were. Following his example, his major officers of state kept concubines in every town in the empire. . . . When the emperor entered a town, the honest women were gravely disturbed, for their virtue was menaced not only by him but also by his officers of state. Many mothers kept their daughters shut up to keep them from the notice of those who were powerful enough to take them, with impunity, by violence.[3]

Marriage, then, looked at from the standards of any white Western 175
country, was in a sorry state in Haiti. Continued warfare had broken 831
up many even of the families which, though unrecognized by the 581
white planters, had nevertheless been formed during slavery; and the camp life of soldiers roaming the countryside confirmed the casual attitude of the people toward sex. Every ex-slave was a hero, and liberty was sweet. Under Dessalines it was scarcely wise for a prominent man to marry an attractive wife, the Emperor might so soon set himself to seduce her. Above all, there was no tradition of formal marriage. This was the chief factor to bear upon future marriage and sexual customs of the Haitians; and in appraising them is the paramount fact to keep in mind.

Meanwhile, children were being born. Their mothers were 175
known, but often the fathers were not, for the vast majority of 848
infants were born out of wedlock. Dessalines, a realist except in 428
matters which touched his vanity, saw the necessity of establishing a status for these children, not on grounds of morality but for economic expediency, to avoid future disputes over inheritance. French precedent did not serve his need, for according to French law an illegitimate child may not inherit: a parent in France is not free to leave his property as he will, but must pass it on to his legitimate heirs.

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[3] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haiti*, III, 239.

175 While the broad problems of marriage, inheritance, and legiti-
512 macy were not to be solved by the official act of any ruler, the efforts made, particularly those by Dessalines and Christophe, had their effect upon the development of the marital institution in Haiti.

671 "Whereas," begins the preamble of Dessalines' law of May 28,
848 1805, "it is necessary to fix in immutable order the status and rights of children born out of wedlock, and whereas it is important to reconcile what nature and society owe them with the political interests of the state," therefore it behooves the government to lay
[531] down the specific rules which follow. Nothing in the law pushes the people toward marriage, but every provision strengthens the family, which they had known both in Africa and in the slave régime of the colony.

175 Henceforth no stigma is to attach to the fact of illegitimacy, nor is
671 there to be discrimination in favor of children born in wedlock. The
848 status of a child will depend upon recognition by its parents. If a
428 child's maternal connection is established, he has rights in her property; if the father likewise recognize his offspring, the child has rights in the paternal property; even if the recognition of a child is so long delayed that the parents die, that child who can prove his descent is to receive the name and his own share of property from the deceased. There is but one single provision in which an illegitimate child has an inferior status: should a couple decide to be legally married, they must recognize the natural offspring of either party before or during the wedding ceremony, if such children are to have full claims of inheritance; delay until after the ceremony cuts their claim to only one fourth that of children born legitimately; refusal to recognize the natural child disinherits him, unless he can prove his descent.

[422] Since the Emperor was already engaged upon his campaign to
[423] acquire lands for the state, the property rights guaranteed would refer chiefly to personal property, and only secondarily to land still owned by individuals. Both men and women owned personal property, however, and must therefore pass on this property, a definite percentage going to each son and daughter.

The law is weak in some of its details. It does not specify, for example, how an unmarried father shall leave his property—whether by name to each child he has recognized as his own, or by name to the mothers of his children. It is strong in that it is simple: property

must pass to an illegitimate child if recognition is accorded. It is 175
likewise strong in its harmony with actual conditions: in the absence 671
of legal marriage among the people, it would have been manifestly 848
unfair to favor a few fortunate children. Dessalines argued that the 428
revolution had legitimized all Haitians; that it was unjust to prevent a child's inheriting from the person who had given him life; and that since all Haitians had come out of slavery and degradation into freedom, no new inequalities should be instituted.[4]

If this law encouraged family life, it weakened marriage both of 175
the civil and religious kind: where was the sense in the expensive 581
luxury of a wedding when children were just as legitimate without
it? By conforming to folk practice the Emperor confirmed it. Only 671
the aristocrats disliked his law, for it seemed to make light of one of 565
the distinctions they cherished—the formal wedding. It irked them to have the State place a casual child upon an equal plane with one born after proper marriage.

At still another point the law accorded with living conditions at 175
the time. During the years of fighting many men had been killed, 593
and always the large standing army kept thousands of others away 671
from settled farm life. Home, then, was for a child the abode of his mother—a fact recognized by the law's insistence upon maternal relationship rather than paternity. Such a word as "matriarchate" has no place here; but from the days of Dessalines to modern times, the lowly Haitian thinks of his home primarily as where his mother lives.

As if the advantages of formal wedding were not already suffi- 175
ciently weakened by this law, other enactments of the empire struck
at other phases of marriage. Divorce was permitted for adultery, for 671
incompatibility of temperament or character, and by mutual con- 586
sent. Such provisions not only broke away completely from Catholic practice, but made getting out of wedlock a casual matter of taking an oath. The complaint of incompatibility need be made by only one spouse; "mutual consent" as a ground for divorce was probably not allowed in 1805 in any other country of the Western World.

Dessalines did not appear to care one whit for the good opinion 175
of white foreigners. It sufficed for him if Haiti endured, whatever 643
Europeans thought of her. Christophe, on the other hand, was ex- 648
tremely sensitive to foreign disapproval. Many of his official acts can

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[4] According to the testimony of Madiou, *op. cit.*, III, 216.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

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643 be explained only as efforts to win outside respect for his kingdom of
648 blacks. He was aware of the scorn in which white people held the
apparent absence of all sexual morality in Haiti, and so set about introducing reforms. Even as a general he had opposed the dissoluteness of Dessalines.

175 In an early pronouncement Christophe proscribes concubinage
643 (by which he meant the unmarried unions of the people), libertinage,
582 and "all those disorders which weaken the family." To proscribe an
evil is not necessarily to put an end to it, however, and so he tried
671 also to persuade and educate his people to the habit of full legal
581 marriage. His steps at persuasion were various. In speeches he urged
[595] weddings upon his subjects; yet a man could see little reason for
tying himself to one woman for life, assuming *legal* responsibilities at an expense, when already from experience he knew that he could have a woman's loyalty without the ceremony. Although weddings somewhat increased after 1806, Christophe's verbal campaign was a failure. He next tried force. In one town he made all the females assemble in the public square; then, separating the married from the unmarried, commanded his royal guards to advance, each to select an unmarried woman who should become his wife. At other times he selected young men and women by lot and had them married "by their King's authority." No nobleman in the kingdom could long remain unwed: indeed, Queen Victoria might have approved Christophe's solicitude for the moral uprightness of the Haitian court.

175 Another means by which Christophe forced his people into formal
671 marriage was the indirect one of attacking property rights. Realizing
that Dessalines' law by guaranteeing inheritance to natural children
848 encouraged people to remain unmarried, he rescinded it by one
428 of the first acts of his rule.[5] This act reëstablished French practice, making it all but impossible for illegitimate children to inherit anything. Most persons of property found this law persuasive where words had left them cold. Madiou thought the law "excessively severe in a country where nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the population were born out of wedlock,"[6] and he spoke of its disharmony with general practice at the time. Actually,

[5] Law of March 25, 1807.

[6] Madiou, *op. cit.*, III, 411.

it seems not radically to have affected the masses but only the fairly well-to-do,

000 it seems not radically to have affected the masses but only the fairly
well-to-do.

671 The *Royal Almanac* for the year 1814 touches proudly upon the
581 moral state of the kingdom. The author of the almanac, the Comte
114 de la Limonade, says: "Great attention is paid to morals and manners.
175 Marriage is honored, protected, and encouraged; no Haitian who is
[586] unmarried can fill any place of distinction. Divorce is not permitted."
All this was true; yet the mass of Haitians still remained unmarried.
Nevertheless, the quotation indicates the extent to which Christophe
had gone in his effort to reform marriage and morals among his
people; to set them in the European tradition and draw them out
of their African and colonial backgrounds.

175 While Christophe was trying to effect reforms in the North,
184 Pétion was accepting his Southern folk as they were. Hardly a law
671 during his twelve-year administration touches the subject of mar-
581 riage. The élite colored people continued to make proper legal
428 marriages and so insure the inheritance of their legitimate children.
[585] The common folk lived their family lives without weddings, and if
property questions arose, custom ruled, backed by public opinion in
their little communities.

105 Such are the backgrounds out of which modern Haitian sex rela-
175 tions have developed. From African tradition came family life, the
178 importance of property to stabilize a union, insignificance of a wed-
58 ding ceremony, familiarity with matrilineal kinship and descent;
59 from French colonial practice, formal marriage to establish a family
421 with social ambition, casual sex relations for pleasure outside this
marriage, the claim of legitimate children to all property (in contrast to folk custom, where few legitimate children were born); from Dessalines, an emphasis upon the African tradition and realism; from Christophe, an insistence upon strict French practice in marriage and in the passage of property.

From among these alternatives Haiti made a choice which is an excellent example of what Keller calls "automatic selection in the mores."[7] There was no congress to select one procedure rather than another. Because Pétion and Boyer followed a *laissez-faire* policy in social matters, the people took the path of least resistance.

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[7] A. G. Keller, *Societal Evolution* (revised ed., New York, 1931), chaps. IV and V.

X

HOME LIFE OF THE ÉLITE

565 ONE brief characterization of the élite might be that they are
581 those who carefully observe the proprieties. The proprieties are those of France, and among them is "common sense" in marriage.

175 People of privilege in colonial times, which were the fountainhead
565 of élite tradition, lived at ease and did not concern themselves with manual labor. Nor were they burdened by puritanical codes of
831 sexual morality, but on the contrary enjoyed sex relations with
581 whatever attractive women came their way. But they would have thought it sheer folly to allow momentary delight to interfere with the very practical matter of choosing a wife. Marriage meant increasing one's fortune, strengthening one's social position and connections, establishing one's children. Romance was as irrelevant to all this as to choosing a business partner. This attitude of the French planters, current even in France of the present day, was the standard for freedmen.

175 Even when wealth was most plentiful in colonial society it had
565 not been always easy to find the proper wife for an affranchi youth.
588 For a man to remain single, however, did not mean that he remained celibate. He might, on the contrary, contract a fairly permanent in-
581 formal union of love, while discreetly refraining from a marriage which would jeopardize his own or his family's status. Such informal unions were not generally regarded as immoral. Good taste, it was felt, was a sufficient guide in all matters of sex outside of marriage.

175 The unsettled condition of the colony between the slave insurrection of 1791 and the achievement of independence in 1803–4 did not
565 change the affranchi concept of suitable marriage. During the brief
581 two-year rule of Dessalines, the ideal of propriety in marriage remained the same in spite of the Emperor's efforts to undermine the importance of legal weddings and the legitimacy of children. Pétion, upon his accession in 1806, showed himself a true member of the mulatto aristocratic group—indifferent to the morals of the masses so long as custom settled their problems for them, and content with the marriage traditions of the élite. He said publicly what was neces-

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565 sary for a president to say as to proper respect for moral principles,
581 then left morality to take care of itself.

During Pétion's time and that of Boyer there came into common
175 usage the convenient term "*plaçage*" to describe the extramarital
588 unions of respectable people. "Concubinage" was a crude word, with
565 definite overtones of disapprobation; plaçage was more indirect, and
581 carried no connotation of disrepute. Briefly, plaçage was the union of a man and a woman for pleasure, companionship, and a measure of home life, without the assumption by either person of any legal obligations. A man might make as many of these tentative unions as his disposition, his finances, and his tact dictated. Often enough they were with women of his own social class, for Haiti had an excess of women over men; but generally they were contracted with pleasing women of the lower social orders. Young men not yet financially able to marry, younger brothers whose inheritance was too small to support a family, husbands who had married for practical purposes rather than for love, and eagerly lustful men—these were the usual participators in plaçage.

Although for a woman a church wedding might be the height of ambition, and proper parents tried to see that their daughters achieved it, there came to be a feeling that no disgrace attached to being *placée*. Certainly at the beginning a wife outranked a placée, just as in colonial New England a wife outranked an old maid; but to be placée was a far better lot in Haiti than to be a spinster in Massachusetts Bay colony. No one would have thought of calling a placée by so inaccurate a term as "mistress"; still less would anyone have assailed her moral standing. A man who had a mistress might keep his arrangements with her secret; but plaçage unions were, or came to be, quite open. The one great flaw in the arrangement was that near middle age a man might cease to care about his union with the woman. Foresight and adaptability were the only safeguards against this fate.

565 Nowhere else in the Western World has there been so little actual
581 marriage in proportion to the population as in Haiti. Whether tech-
588 nically it is correct to speak of peasant unions as examples of plaçage is a matter of opinion; certainly the peasants rarely marry. Thousands of Haitian couples in all walks of life could be found at any period since 1804 living quietly together from youth to age, bringing up a family of children with as much order as do others who have had a

581 wedding to consecrate their state. These unions might be called
565 (after Anglo-Saxon usage) common-law marriages. Many such
588 couples have, late in life, gone through the wedding ceremony at the
insistence of children aspiring to social prestige.

Haitian writers have frequently felt it necessary to explain and
175 justify to the outside world the practice of plaçage. Thus Saint-Rémy
114 in 1857 wrote: "*Plaçage*, or primitive marriage, is still one of the
581 Haitian customs. It requires no civil or religious formality. I must
588 confess that some of these unions are more respectable than those
565 sanctified by civil and religious law."[1] Dantès Bellegarde in 1934
implied (erroneously) that the practice had always been one limited primarily to peasants. He said:

> Haitians have been accused of immorality because they practice free unions. This reproach is unjust. Concubinage is without doubt the rule among the people [that is, the peasants and workmen]; but it constitutes a sort of *connubium injustum* (unlegal marriage) which, in many cases, has nothing immoral about it, certain "plaçages" having more solidity and seriousness than a large number of regular marriages. In order to understand the existence of this custom and its persistence in the lower classes of Haitian society, one must go back to the colonial epoch: the whites kept
> [162] numerous concubines, white women being few in Saint-Domingue. (The white population of Saint-Domingue was composed in 1789 of 30,826 souls, of whom 21,166 were men and 9,660 women—not counting soldiers and sailors.) On the other hand, the Negroes did not marry each other, because they did not care at all to have wives whom the master might "abuse," to use the word of Père du Tertre; moreover, masters did not require their slaves to be married: they mated them with a view to obtaining fine "products."
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> Concubinage tends to disappear among us, or at least to become more discreet. In the cultivated class people generally marry, and the girls in most modest condition—having passed through the primary schools—resign themselves willingly today to the diversion of their unused affections to cats and other domestic animals if no one offers to lead such girls to the altar.[2]

175 Nineteenth-century visitors were generally shocked by plaçage,
581 just as middle-class people are usually shocked by sex ways which
588 seem franker than their own. That the Haitian practice was a practical one, based upon a desire to preserve property intact within the

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[1] *Pétion et Haïti*, V, 66 note.

[2] *Un Haïtien parle* (Port-au-Prince, 1934), pp. 30–31.

175 family and to make only "sensible" marriages, was a fact rarely
581 glimpsed by the critics. A good example of their attitude is the state-
588 ment of the pious English Quaker, John Candler, in 1842:

> [114] But few of the merchants or principal inhabitants are married men: concubinage is common, and unhappily, regarded as not dishonorable. Whenever a ball is given, or a large party invited, the invitation is equally extended to "Monsieur and Madame ——" or to "Monsieur —— and his lady"; and by this compounding of moral distinctions among the upper classes, the evil descends to the lower ranks and becomes perpetuated.[3]

[867] And later Candler accuses Haitian mothers of being "utterly dead to all moral considerations," because they do not take pains to instill (middle-class English) ideals of morality, or teach the young the evils of "wayward passion."

175 Not even Haitian authors were willing to accept plaçage as a
114 desirable practice. Beaubrun Ardouin explained that the color preju-
581 dice of colonial times was responsible for what he clearly considered
an evil.[4] "The aristocracy of skin" made plaçage prevail over "divine
588 law," for whites would not often in colonial times marry colored
563 women. The same prejudice in the republic kept light-colored men from marrying darker women, but not from living with them. Ardouin believed that Haiti would gain infinitely by adopting "*les bonnes moeurs,*" not on moral grounds, but for practical reasons. With regular marriage, he says, there would result a greater fixity of the conjugal state and more confidence on the part of the women, "who too often discover that they are only the satisfaction of a whim"; also the men would reflect more upon the consequence of an infidelity which, in dividing families, might separate children from father or mother and so greatly weaken the delicate relations of paternal love and filial piety. Still another consideration was political: the dispersion which resulted in the inheritance of property when many mothers and children compete. Because of plaçage unions, quite a number of estates had been reduced to almost nothing.

175 As the century progressed, the custom of plaçage prevailed from
581 the President down to the humblest peasant. The women of the
588 President were visited publicly by him; sometimes he was accom-
643 panied on his visits by a staff or selected officers of state. The critical

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[3] *Brief Notices of Hayti*, pp. 24, 25.
[4] *La Géographie de l'Ile d'Haïti*, pp. 181, 96 ff.

175 Englishman, Sir Spenser St. John, said that he had met placées of the
591 President at dinner, and was asked to trace resemblances between
588 children and their reported father. "No one seeks to conceal it, and
643 the conversation of married ladies continually turns on this subject. One excuse for it is that many of the ladies whom you meet in society were only married after the birth of their first children. However, according to French law, that ceremony renders them all legitimate. Some of those admitted into society are not married at all, but their daughters being married, prevents notice being taken of the false position of the mother."[5]

565 In recent years the élite, although many continue to contract
581 plaçage unions, keep these arrangements quieter than formerly and tend to make them with women lower in the social scale than themselves. Formal and regular marriage is expected and approved among the upper classes of today. Indeed, one modern informant in answer to the question, "What is the primary test of membership among the élite?" replied without hesitation, "Five generations of marriage in the family."[6]

583 Formal marriage is not entered into lightly among the upper
565 classes. It is a serious business watched over by state, family, and church. The interest of the state seems to be to guard against bigamy. The possibility of bigamy is the more likely since one or the other contracting party may have formerly lived in plaçage. The interest of the family is in the wisdom of the alliance. Before a wedding can be performed both parties must have obtained the formal consent of their parents, besides having their banns published at their respective places of permanent residence. There seems to be some doubt whether the courts would uphold a father in his refusal to consent to the marriage of a son over twenty-one years old; but cases are known in which such a refusal has stopped the wedding. Of course, the daughters must always obtain parental consent to marry.

585 The civil wedding, adopted in Haiti at the beginning of her independence, is usually followed by a religious ceremony. The Church, like the State, takes precautions against clandestine marriages and bigamy. Notice of a projected union must be read from the pulpit

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[114] [5] *Hayti, or the Black Republic*, I, 177–178.

[6] John Lobb, in "Caste and Class in Haiti" (*American Journal of Sociology*, XLVI,
[581] No. 1 [July, 1940], 29), states that "one informant defined family status as a position
[554] resulting from the recognition that in a family the parents had, for generations, been legally married in the church."

of the parish church to which each party belongs, and no ceremony 585
may be performed by a priest without the presentation of the certificate
of the civil marriage.

According to the legal code, as well as actual practice of the upper 562
classes, woman is man's definite inferior in rights.[7] The Haitian code follows closely that of Napoleon, and both conform in general to practice common among substantial people in the Haiti and France of the early nineteenth century. Spouses equally owe to each other fidelity, succor, and assistance; the husband owes protection to his wife, the wife obedience to her husband. Although the wife must live with her husband wherever he chooses, he conversely must receive her when she comes to live with him, and must provide food for her. No wife may purchase, sell, give, or otherwise alienate property without the consent of her husband; moreover, the husband alone has the administration of goods coming in the dowry, so long as the union endures.

The modern movement for women's rights has hardly touched
Haiti.[8] Women may not vote, nor may they hold public office.
Among the élite, in theory and in practice woman's place is in the
home, caring for the household and the children. One might imagine
himself in provincial France as he sees the daily life of upper-class
Haitian women: the ordering of meals, directing of servants, sewing,
shopping, visiting, party going, occasional novel reading, driving
in the family car. Different from French practice, however, is the
taboo against most manual labor: this is the task of servants only.
The élite housewife may cook but not sweep, sew but not launder,
bargain with a huckster but not carry home her purchases. A woman
of the upper classes would demean herself to enter business. Since [463]
the American Occupation, as a matter of fact, a few women have
been daring enough to become secretaries and stenographers, but
there seems to be nothing like a concerted movement for the "emancipation"
of élite women. There are schools for girls, but these do [871]
not reach as far as the schools for boys; women are not admitted to
the law school or medical school, for a woman lawyer or doctor [463]
would be unthinkable in Haitian society.

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[7] See Louis Borno, *Code civil d'Haiti annoté* (Port-au-Prince, 1892), chap. VI, articles 196–201.

[8] See, however, Madeleine G. Sylvain, "The Feminist Movement in Haiti," *Bulletin of the Pan-American Union*, LXXIII, No. 6 (June, 1939), 315–321. [113]

582 The male, by contrast, is master in all matters, including those pertaining to home life. Obviously, he is much freer in his sexual life than is his wife.

586 Divorce is comparatively rare, thanks to the careful solicitude of
all parties before formal marriage is contracted, and to the disap-
proval of the Catholic Church. Since the husband is not, by custom
or by public opinion, bound to limit his sexual attentions to his legal
[837] wife, one of the common causes of divorce is removed. The code
allows formal divorce to the husband for the wife's adultery, and to
the wife for her husband's adultery "when he shall bring his concu-
bine into the common dwelling house." Both spouses may secure
divorce for excess, for injurious cruelty, for life sentences imposed by
[587] a court—"*peines afflictives et infamantes.*" A woman whose marriage
has been dissolved by divorce cannot remarry before the expiration
of one year, nor is she permitted to remarry her former husband.
[582] The opposition of the Church to divorce is a distinct deterrent to élite
[771] women who crave freedom, for women are generally the more
devout members of the Church.

XI

DOMESTIC LIFE OF THE PEASANTS

HAITI apparently has more women than men. This is not merely the casual impression of visitors, but a general conviction among local scholars and priests who know the country intimately. There is no census, of course, so that an investigator lacks means of confirming an unusual biological situation in which, it is said, there are five women to four men, in which many more girls than boys are born, and in which the death rate is higher for females than for males. 162 [699] [163] [165]

During slavery, more men than women were imported into the colony, but the slaughters of the insurrection and the revolution more than balanced the two sexes. The colonial census of 1790, probably inaccurate, showed 452,000 blacks and 28,000 affranchis who had some degree of Negro blood; a census of 1805, which certainly could not have been more than an estimate based on reports of plantation overseers and army officers, reported only 380,000 Haitians. This would indicate a staggering loss of 100,000 within fifteen years. Even with a reasonable juggling of the figures, it is obvious that deaths increased during the troubled years, and obviously males rather than females met their death on battlefields. Commentators on Haiti under Dessalines already speak of the preponderance of women. Other writers during the nineteenth century expressed the opinion that women outnumbered men, but the only figures offered were those in one parish for 1821–26—possibly atypical even if the figures are accurate—showing that 1,305 girls were born as compared with 1,209 boys.[1] 175 162

Certain physicians whose practice takes them into country districts and also certain priests have stated their belief that the number of females born exceeds the number of males. Although these men are in a good position to judge, the statement remains an opinion not yet validated by statistics; if it should prove true, it would be an extraordinary biological freak.[2] Another observation must be set 163 [114]

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[1] These are the figures of Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Hayti*, II, 118. [114]

[2] One physician thinks that the rate would be as high as five girls to three boys in a few parishes; and a priest recounts his experiences in baptizing girls named "Assez-filles" (Girls-enough), so called by their parents to indicate to deity that the next child should by rights be a boy. Professional observations such as these merely corroborate the general opinion as to the excess of females in the population. [163] [551]

588 162 Another observation must be set alongside this professional testimony: many men, both aristocrats and common folk, have more than one placée, yet there seem to be enough women for Haitian men.

595 565 Although peasants in Haiti are rarely married by formal ceremony, the family is a dominant characteristic of peasant life. This sums up the domestic situation among the masses.

When it is recalled that the Negro, from the time he was taken from Africa on slave ships, had almost no experience of the European tradition of conventional marriage, one has a partial explanation of the absence of peasant weddings. For the rest the people are realists, arguing that a man should have as many women as he needs to carry on the economy of his land holdings; the law forbids polygamy, but exerts no control over plural unions which are entered without formal ceremony. It has therefore come to be regularly accepted in the mores that practical need should determine the number of women to one man. If a peasant increases his land holdings, if he buys or inherits a second farm on the other side of the mountain, it is only common sense for him to take a second woman, raise a family by her, and thus have an overseer and a labor supply resident on each of his properties. Everyone in the community knows what women belong to what man, and custom strongly taboos any tampering with another man's spouses.

162 581 163 Only the Catholic Church has statistics to reveal the infrequency of marriages among the masses. The story was the same a century ago as now. In the important parish of Gonaïves in 1825 the proportion of marriages to births was as 1 to 62; in 1826 they were as 1 to 54.[3] Both figures include marriages and births among the élite, and Gonaïves is a town: in the countryside the proportion of marriages would be much lower. The parish priest of Carrefours, which numbers about a thousand households, stated that in 1936 there had been only ten marriages among his six or eight thousand parishioners. [848] Another parish priest estimated that only one half of one per cent of the baptisms performed were of children born to parents legally married. Even in the parish of Pétionville, home of many élite, a priest estimates that less than one child in five is born to married 595 parents. A century ago a commandant at Léogane, speaking of a high army officer, said, "He is my brother-in-law: I live with his sister." Near Port-au-Prince lived a rural police captain with six plaçage spouses.

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[3] Mackenzie, op. cit., II, 119-120.

595 spouses. In the hills more than one peasant house was surrounded, as
it would have been in Dahomey, by huts in each of which lived a
"wife" of the farmer. Matters are not very different nowadays,
except that men have learned the wisdom of not having their women
live too close to each other.

162 From the guesses of experienced observers, it is probably not far
582 wide of the mark to estimate that only one couple out of a hundred
is married according to the approved mode of the Western World.

The State apparently does not care; or, to put it another way,
government officials know how impossible it would be to alter a
custom confirmed by long usage; one which, moreover, works well
enough, since it causes practically no violence or legal cases for the
795 State to attend to. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, is eager
582 to persuade the people to observe the sacrament of holy matrimony.
The priests have assiduously endeavored to explore the peasant mind
in order to learn what deters the average person from formal
marriage. The reasons for the indifference to weddings might be
listed as follows:

581 1. Inertia. There is no convincing reason to vary time-honored
178 practice which works well enough, particularly since a wedding is
likely to cause a great disturbance of daily routine and even a measure
of jealousy on the part of those who have not made the display.

581 2. Suspicion of legal documents and civil officials. People who put
821 their names (or marks) on documents and who call the attention of
governmental officials to themselves are almost sure to rue the day.
A man knows what can be demanded of him by custom in his
informal unions; but who can say what the law would hold him
responsible for?

581 3. Expense. The civil license costs; the priest and his assistants
595 must be paid; to be married in church, one should wear shoes; if one
wears shoes, one should dress up to them; a church wedding calls for
a feast. At least two days must be spent away from work if the proper
formalities are carried out.

581 4. Common sense in an inevitable situation. Both State and
595 Church would try to limit a man to one wife; prosperity might
demand two or more. Is it sensible to discriminate against a second
woman, who might be just as much help to a man as his legal wife?

581 The Church through its priests works unceasingly to answer these
794 arguments, but without notable success. Inertia is hard to overcome;

581 suspicion of legal complications is well founded: the priests therefore 794 try to concentrate their attack upon the remaining motives. Thus one priest issued a notice at a certain mountain chapel that he would perform no weddings there for persons who wore shoes; an increase in weddings followed. By such devices, and by constant sermons on the significance of the sacrament, he has persuaded many of his parishioners to be married, yet the vast majority of them continue in plaçage.[4]

581 Informally entered unions among the peasants, then, rest upon a sound, practical, economic basis. If the priests are ever to be successful in their campaign for more weddings, Haitian peasant economy must undergo a change; even then the plurality of women (if indeed it exists), now more or less absorbed by plaçage, will work against the reform.

562 It is confusing to speak of "status" in connection with the domestic 565 life of hard-working people, for status implies law, and law hardly touches peasant life. Custom governs all—inevitably, since the majority of peasant women have not been legally married, and since no peasant would willingly take a case to law. Yet women have a definite status as compared with men.

In almost every detail a peasant woman's life differs from that of élite women. The rule of life in country districts is unremitting labor 462 for the female from childhood up. She cooks and makes clothes, 565 labors in the fields after the men have cleared them, does the family 443 washing in the nearest stream, carries water, does whatever housework is required. Practically every Haitian peasant woman has her experience of going to market to sell the vegetables, trinkets, or [484] other wares her family may produce, and to buy necessities. This trip to market may be short, or as long as twenty miles. One of the characteristic sights of Haiti is the seemingly endless procession of women coming down from the hills trudging, or rather swinging majestically along, with a great load on the head, or riding on the haunches of a tiny donkey loaded with bulging panniers. Arrived at the market, the women sit all day in the broiling sun, and in Port-au-Prince at least, sometimes sleep near by for the night, in order to complete their purchases and sales and to get their fill of companionable gossip. They are often accompanied by the youngest of their children, some of whom have to be carried. 462 565 443

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[4] As a result of his campaign for more weddings he has had some unusual experiences. Once, in the midst of the wedding ceremony, a bride rushed out of the chapel and shortly gave birth to a child; when she was able to move again, the ceremony was resumed. Again, traveling into the mountains to perform a similar ceremony, he found a crowd assembled under a tree, assisting at another birth of an infant to a bride-to-be. Sometimes he encounters the argument by a peasant that he will not consent to a wedding until his spouse has proved her fecundity by bearing a certain number of children.

Some observers profess to see evidences of a matriarchate among the peasants, for as a general rule the woman attends to the business dealings of the market place, handles the money, directs her children, and manages the household. If the man has more than one placée spouse, complete control of the farm is the woman's during the absence of her man. It is a superficial judgment, however, to speak of the peasant mother as a matriarch. The man owns the land, chooses his women, calls for help at the moment he pleases for preparation of the ground for planting; and when he knows his end to be near, summons all his families and disposes of his property as he sees fit. His decision is final. But he is no more a patriarch than his woman is a matriarch: they are economic partners in a struggle for existence. 562 593 592

By our standards, the woman is inferior to the man not only in rights but in being one spouse of several. He may contract several unions, while she may have only one. She does more steady, if not more actual, physical labor than the man. When he is at home, she must offer him the best of the food. As usual in simple societies, however, the issue rarely arises as to superiority or inferiority of the sexes. Customary behavior is followed without much question. 562

There is one great contrast between élite and peasant women, in the matter of childbirth. The élite mother takes as much care of herself during pregnancy and parturition as would an American woman in well-to-do circles. The peasant mother, on the contrary, cannot allow herself the luxury of medical attention, nor can she spare the time to rest quietly. Like many so-called "primitive" women, she apparently finds herself little incommoded either by pregnancy or birth. Babies are born frequently in the market place, the mother having come down from the hills only that day with her goods. It is not unusual to hear of the birth of a child in a roadside ditch or in a grove by the path to and from the market town. The care given mother and infant is primitive: the navel cord is cut with a sharp stone or a piece of broken glass; a short rest is thought sufficient before the mother resumes her task. As might be expected, the death rate from infection is high and women age prematurely. 565 844 846 [165] [145]

Parents are generally kind to their children, so far as physical

Parents are generally kind to their children, so far as physical
855 punishment is concerned. The average peasant child can hardly
861 properly be said to be "brought up": he merely grows, eats whatever his family eats or whatever fruits he can pick up, and learns his place
152 in the community as he matures. In anger, parents are likely to use in correction the first thing that comes to hand. There is a surprising callousness to pain among these generally kindly people: they beat their donkeys unmercifully, and strap harness over open sores; they carry chickens, head down and feet tied together and mouths gaping, for miles in the sun; they revel in gory cockfights. If, therefore, a parent is minded to beat his child, he will probably do a thorough
[578] job of it. A peasant woman, pommeling her son with a broomstick, replied to the protests of a white passer-by, "*Li nègue; li pas fait li mal.*" ("He's a Negro; it won't hurt him.") The interference of a stranger in the beating of a wife by her man, armed with a club, was resented by both man and woman as an interference with a purely family quarrel.

831 The concept of sexual continence is lacking among the peasants.
834 Sex, indeed, hardly enters the realm of morality except in connection
864 with adulterous dalliance of one man with another's woman. There is no virtue in abstaining from sex relations when the sexual urge is strong. Mothers tell love stories in all their frank details to their young daughters, and some who care about such matters are adept in all lore connected with stimulating and satisfying a man's desire.[5]
[342] Since huts are small and the whole family sleeps in the same room, children have ample opportunity to observe the sexual life of their parents. If a girl, as a result of her own experiments, has a child born to her, there is no disgrace. Practically every peasant is "illegitimate," so that the term means nothing; a baby will soon be old enough to assist in the work of the home, thus becoming an asset. It is expected that as soon as a youth grows up he will find a mate and begin a family of his own.

241 The family is as important an element of peasant life as formal
439 marriage is unimportant. It is the economic unit. Ever since the days
593 of Pétion Haitian economy has been one of small things: even the crops are small subsistence crops of maize, millet, beans, rice, yams, and frequently trees of bananas, plantains, and coffee, which require no particular cultivation. Enough coffee has been produced in Haiti for annual export ever since 1804, but until recent years the beans

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[5] See Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, pp. 22 ff.

have been gathered from trees which grew wild. Both men and 593
women labor, with the work divided according to regular custom 241
between the sexes, the men dominating the scene only in the marketing 439
of coffee.

Nature was opulent enough at the beginning of Haitian independence. 134
The wars had ruined irrigation ditches, sugar refineries, 311
and mechanical equipment, but the soil was still abundantly fertile.
But generations of farming by people without knowledge of fertilization or soil conservation have worn out much of the land. Trees have been cut to provide lumber and clearings for more farms; in the rainy seasons torrents have coursed down the mountainsides, washing away soil and exposing the earth to the rays of a tropical sun.
Because the country is overpopulated every available acre is put to 311
use, and to overuse, thus still more depleting the land. It is a vicious circle, for the next generation must extract yet more from the earth and so weaken it further. Hard work is the lot of the peasant, therefore,
during every month of the year except the dry season. There 241
has never been a formal rotation of crops: a farmer continues to plant the same crop in the same field until the harvest is perceptibly smaller than before. Then he changes to another type of produce. Sooner or later he will allow the land to lie fallow for several years until, by the action of nature or the grazing over it of cattle, it has regained a measure of its fertility.

The strenuous work of clearing fields and preparing them for 241
cultivation is man's job. Since the peasants owned their plots it has 574
almost always been done in coöperation by the men of the neighborhood. 476
What on the American frontier would have been called a "bee" is known in Haiti as a *coumbite*, or *combite*, often carried on as an enterprise of the local *Société Congo*, the informal neighborhood group for mutual aid and fellowship.[6]

A man who has a large job on hand announces a coumbite for any [527]
day except Sunday, always a day of rest, and whatever other week-

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[6] The word "coumbite" was apparently borrowed from the Spanish part of the [192]
island, and from the Spanish word *convidar*, convey. In Colombia "convite" means exactly what "coumbite" means in Haiti: a gathering of peasants to work in common, or else a coöperative society for mutual agricultural self-help.

Professor Herskovits (*Life in a Haitian Valley*, chap. IV) describes the Société Congo [114]
in detail. The use of the name "Congo" indicates the African tradition, and is particularly [192]
noteworthy in connection with a kind of coöperative work which Herskovits finds particularly Dahomean.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

476

241 day local practice dedicates to work in one's own fields—generally
574 Monday or Tuesday. The prospect of working with one's fellows,
[527] of a midday feast with plentiful drink, of singing, talking, and hearing the news, is enough to induce most of the neighbors to come, even though the work will be hard. As with American log-rollings and house-raisings, there is a practical reason for accepting the invitation: by participating in other coumbites a man will be able to invite his neighbors to help him in his own larger tasks. The work is
[461] done in rhythm[7] as on Southern road gangs in the United States, with one man specially designated to beat the drum, blow the conch, or sing a topical song, to set the pace. While the men are at work, the women prepare the noonday feast.

114 This typical characteristic of Haitian rural life has been described in detail as it operates near the village of Mirebalais by Prof. Melville
476 J. Herskovits. His contention is that the custom, in general and in
574 detail, derives from Dahomey, West Africa, the home of many of
174 the original slaves.[8] Although his evidence is impressive, there are
171 nevertheless objections to it. Coöperative enterprise for tasks larger than one man can accomplish alone is common in the United States
178 and in parts of Europe and South America, as well as in Africa. It is
241 not an economic device which strikes one as requiring unusual inventiveness, for cases of it are common even where the participants have had no previous experience of it. Further, Dahomean practice could not have been kept up during slave days, nor yet during the régimes of Toussaint, Dessalines, Christophe, and Pétion. (The first three required forced labor under overseers, and landownership by peasants was still rare under Pétion, although a beginning had been made.) In the thirty years from 1790, when the last slaves arrived, until Christophe died in 1820, many old ways were certainly forgotten. Not a single one of the numerous books written by visitors during Boyer's quarter-century, 1818 to 1843, mentions the practice, which certainly must have struck Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Americans if it had been characteristic of the peasant life of the time. If one concludes that the coumbite did not become peasant practice until the mid-nineteenth century, all possibility of contact with Negroes familiar with Dahomean routine has disappeared. What

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[7] A Haitian poet, Charles F. Pressoir, entitles a book of his verses *Au Rythme des coumbites* (Port-au-Prince, 1933).

[8] *Op. cit.*, chap. IV.

what remains is the verbal handing down of recollections, one of the most 174
natural things in the world and one congenial to Haitian peasants. 241
Every region, every village, has its accomplished storytellers. The 574
phenomenal resemblances in detail of the coumbite to Dahomean 476
coöperative work may be due therefore to this verbal tradition. 538

Once the men have cleared and prepared the field, the care of the
crop devolves upon the women. For this there has been a long back- 241
ground of tradition. In African agricultural regions, in the plantations 175
of Saint-Domingue during slave days, under the forced labor ré-
gimes of Toussaint and his successors, women had been field workers. 462
They had never known anything else. We have seen that many of 701
the present-day practices of Haiti go back to the times of Pétion and Boyer: during this period women did field work, not by decree of government but by force of circumstance. Their men were constantly taken away from the farms for service in the large army; if crops were to be raised, women must do the work. Sometimes soldiers were stationed near their own homes, and could help in production; but they could be called on to march, at short notice and in peacetime, anywhere in the country. Many of the later presidents made it a definite policy frequently to change the station of regiments, so as to prevent revolutionary projects and guard against the soldiers' being tampered with by the disaffected in any single community.

Sir Harry Johnston records his observations on the Haiti of 1910 114
as follows:

> The women are the best part of the nation. They are splendid, unremitting 114
> toilers. In the face of all discouragements with which a bad Government 462-
> clouds their existence the women of Haiti remind one of certain patient 461
> types of ant or termite, who, as fast as you destroy their labour of months
> or days, hasten to repair it with unslackening energy. The market-women [701]
> that descend from the country farms to the Haitian towns know that on their way to the market-place, and in that market-place, they will be robbed by soldiers and officers until the margin of profit on the sale of their wares has practically disappeared. Yet they continue to toil, to raise poultry and cattle, till the fields, see to their gardens, make pottery and mats. They cannot stop to reason, but must go on working from three years old to the end of their lives. Such industry (which is almost equally supplemented by that of the peasant husbands) protected should make Haiti one of the richest countries in the world for its size and population; but so long

114 461 as it is cursed by the present military despotism, the utmost that the women
462 of Haiti can do is to keep their country just above the waters of bankruptcy
and their households from complete despair.[9]

701 Since 1910 the military has been reformed, and the women are not
175 mulcted by soldiers and officers; Sir Harry's prophecy regarding the
material benefits of removing the curse of military despotism was
overly optimistic.

441 Rounding out the economic life of the peasant is the market,
443 which provides an outlet for whatever surplus is produced, a source
175 of needed supplies and a modicum of money, as well as an almost
imperative diversion for hard-working women. The origin of Haitian markets may have been either French or West African, for both regions had them. They were certainly in existence by 1803 in Saint-Domingue, for Madiou speaks of the trade of the plainsmen of the Cul-de-Sac with the holders of what then was called Port Républicain (now Port-au-Prince), adding: "Each Sunday at Croix-des-Bouquets a market was held which brought together more than 4,000 cultivators, male and female, with the permission of the overseers or proprietors."[10] That so large a number came to the market is an indication of the social as well as the economic nature of this institution. Similarly, in the North in 1803, "Rochambeau, now master at the Cape, set about attending to the market established at Petit-Anse in July. After having suppressed all the markets which existed around the Cape, he opened a single and general one, 13th August, at Petit-Anse, one league from the city." The French general was making use of a familiar economic device to carry forward the economic life of the colony during the trying period of the wars.

175 In independent Haiti it was an almost immediate development
441 that the women generally should do the marketing, the men being
either required to work on the land or busy at military duty. It came
462 to be accepted quite simply that going to market was a woman's work.
466 From 1843 on through most of the century there was an additional
702 reason why peasant men would not go to the market towns: recruits
were needed, both for the army and whatever revolutionary coup might be brewing; a man who did not relish fighting did better to stay out of sight in the hills. In fact, this has even been called the chief

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[9] *The Negro in the New World*, pp. 196–197.

[10] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, III, 24, 34.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

702 466

reason for which women assumed a larger part of the agricultural 175
work than in the early days of the century: to keep their husbands 441
indoors during the hours of daylight. 462

Haitian markets seemed to fascinate foreign visitors a hundred 175
years ago as they do today. One Englishman, describing the markets 441
at Cap-Haïtien and Gonaïves, said that riding one morning to market in the latter small town he passed 465 persons and all sorts of animals. "The women as usual were decently dressed; and the men were more respectable than any we had seen on our route: they were evidently small cultivators who live on their own freeholds. . . . All were cheerful and happy."[11]

Ever since force was withdrawn from the economic life of the 114
Haitians—that is, since 1820—a steady round of criticism has been
leveled at the "laziness" of the average male. Much of this can be 461
discounted as coming from unsympathetic white foreigners who visited Haiti to find proof of Negro inferiority; some of it again is not significant, since it is the product of élite essayists who cherished the prepossession that the black was born to menial labor, and that if he did not work he had small reason for existence. The fact remains that not even friendly authors have been able to refrain from comment upon the inertia of the Haitian man, whether of the 1830's or, indeed, the present day. It is worth selecting half a dozen of the earlier criticisms, ranging from 1826 to 1860—two by Haitians, two by Englishmen, and two by Americans. Impressionistic, they nevertheless establish a basis from which to gauge the accuracy or inaccuracy of the charge.

In 1826, Placide Justin, drawing most of his material from the notes of the British agent in the Antilles, wrote: "The Haitian man is characterized by an almost unbelievable inertia. He is practically without ambition in political as well as in private life. No one seems to worry about tomorrow."[12] Two years later the Englishman, James Franklin, compared the régimes of Christophe in the North and of Pétion and Boyer in the South; with the former he was entirely sympathetic, but in 1828

> the state of ignorance prevailing among the people in the mountains and the interior parts is almost inconceivable. It appears as if the work of civilization had not commenced, and that the people had not taken one

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[11] John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, pp. 25, 26.
[12] *Histoire politique et statistique de l'île d'Hayti*, p. 536.

> 114 461 voluntary step towards improving themselves in any one thing. . . . Experiments may be tried, laws may be enacted, and encouragement given, but nothing short of coërcion and want will impel the Haytian to labour; and I have my doubts as to the practicability of enforcing labour in Hayti until the people have been better instructed, and their characters become changed. . . . Nature is too generous to the Haytian; he never wants, and so never works for hire, as do free labourers in other countries.[13]

An American, Dr. Jonathan Brown of Philadelphia, in 1837 published a volume which in most respects seems quite dispassionate. He says:

> [462] The females are compelled to perform most of the labor. Those of the country employ themselves in cultivating the soil, while the men spend their time in traversing the country on horseback, in drinking, smoking, and other habits equally unprofitable. The females of the town perform all the retail traffic of the country. . . . They derive a subsistence for themselves and for their families.[14]

175 241 208 178 Boyer's secretary of state, Inginac, tried by means of a pamphlet—which few Haitians could have read—to urge the peasants of 1840 to greater activity. He says that although coffee is the chief source of Haitian wealth, although every day small properties have been multiplied, although times are improving, yet the old routines are still followed in coffee cultivation, as if the men would never work and "as if the Haitians were not susceptible of making any progress in the sciences."[15]

114 461 In 1842 an English Quaker, John Candler, wrote that without a modicum of labor the peasants could not subsist at all; "but they do not, and they will not, work hard to please anybody, and hence agriculture languishes, and commerce is stationary."[16] Finally, in 1860, Benjamin Hunt, an American, remarked: "If one wants to be lazy, Hayti is the place. It is possible to get through the day with little annoyance from cold, hunger, or the police, and with the least possible amount of work."[17] Similar testimony could be greatly multiplied. It is only in recent years that any author has affirmed that

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[13] *The Present State of Hayti*, pp. 359–362.

[14] *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo*, II, 281.

[15] Joseph Balthasar Inginac, "*Culture du caféier et préparation de la fève pour être livrée au commerce*" [a pamphlet], (Port-au-Prince, 1840), p. 1.

[16] *Brief Notices of Hayti*, p. 38.

[17] *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans*, p. 12.

the men as well as the women work arduously. It seems justifiable 114 to conclude that industry has not always been a characteristic of the 461 Haitian male; and to ask why.

One valid reason is, of course, political. As we have seen, until the 175 American Occupation Haiti was greatly overmilitarized. Almost 701 every able-bodied male was at one time or another during his prime 461 a soldier in the army. Since the bane of the country from 1804 to 1915 was its revolutions, there was room for a man to serve either in the regular army or, lured by future promises, in the guerrilla forces of a scheming general. To be drawn away from the land at the very moment of physical maturity was to predispose a youth against humdrum field work. As a soldier he traveled, knew excitement, was fed and clothed, and could loaf, except during battle. So schooled, upon retirement from the army a man was hardly disposed to settle down to steady labor. Even if as a young man he remained upon his farm, he might at any moment be called away to service, just when he was most needed for the crop. If Haiti was to be fed, the women, who alone were exempt from army service, provided the only available regular workers.

Tradition offers another explanation for masculine independence 174 of hard work. The African background of female agricultural labor 462 has been cited. In slavery the men had been degraded by being forced 562 to do work of this sort, while the lot of women hardly differed from 567 what it had been in the old country. Under Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe, with their large armies, women, already numerically preponderant, formed the vast majority of field workers. Independent small farming hardly changed the picture. African tradition, moreover, made the man master of his property and wives, the rôle of woman being that of man's inferior and useful servant.

Disease is another partial explanation. Until recently no one seems 164 to have been aware of the prevalence in Haiti of such diseases as 461 hookworm, malaria, and tuberculosis which, without necessarily affecting a person outwardly, may nevertheless sap his vitality, leaving him listless and worn out by even slight exertion. Obviously much of what was called laziness was due to disease. But the flaw in this reasoning is that illness makes no discrimination between the sexes. If men were disease-ridden, so were women: yet the latter were steadily industrious.

Any foray into possible psychological reasons is guesswork. It

Any foray into possible psychological reasons is guesswork. It
461 might be hazarded that the men felt they had fought for freedom and so deserved to enjoy its benefits; or that agriculture smacked of the old days of slavery and should be avoided by the superior male; or that since ambition for progress was not a Haitian characteristic, and the work of women produced enough food, there was no reason to change a routine which did very well. One cannot speak with definiteness on these matters. And it was upper-class Haitians and foreigners who adjudged peasant men lazy; slaves and "forced" laborers always appear lazy to their masters.

462 In modern times at least, male peasants toil strenuously, although not so continuously as their females. The preparation of the ground for planting is hard work, and is done entirely by men. Harvesting, housebuilding, marketing the coffee (one form of marketing not beneath a man's dignity)—these are men's major contributions to economic life.

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178 People who live in isolation commonly tend to slide back in such externalities as clothes, manners, neatness of person and of dwelling, speech, and social ritual. Almost from the very beginning of Haitian history, most of the people were effectively isolated from the rest of the world, so that the superficial aspects of daily life exhibited to all visitors the spectacle of retrogression.

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291 Christophe, who had frequent English visitors in his kingdom, forced his subjects to dress neatly. After his time no ruler made regulations for dress. The men commonly wore a pair of cotton trousers and an abbreviated shirt, while women's dress was a loose-fitting garment which might be called a Mother Hubbard. Children could, and can now, be seen up to the age of four or five without
[369] any clothes at all. The nearer the countrypeople live to towns, where the example of the élite is before them, the better their dress is likely to be.

342 Slave cabins on the former plantations were inhabited by the free Haitians until decay set in and the cabins fell down. They were ordinarily superseded by huts which could be constructed of withes
[333] and thatch. The British Minister during the eighteen-twenties saw a man near Plaisance building his house, "plastering the wattling, of which the walls were composed, with a mixture of mud and ashes," using his hand as a trowel.[18] Almost never did a hut have more than

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[18] Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, I, 150.

two rooms to house the whole family. "In these huts, filth and every 342
species of uncleanliness prevail, for the people give themselves up to [515]
their indolent and lazy habits. It is common to see the pigs and
poultry herding with the family."[19]

The furnishings in the huts were as simple as the construction. 352
Rarely was there more than one bed, if that, the children of the
family used mats for sleeping. A table, a stool, a couple of patched [415]
chairs, calabash bowls, an iron pot or two (and in later days, discarded
gasoline tins), comprise the household equipment.

The fine roads of the French régime became rutted and washed, 653
were overgrown with weeds, and soon reverted to wasteland or 492
became nothing more than paths. Carriages ceased to be of any use, 493
and there were few wagons; donkeys and horses became the regular 491
means of transportation, and this was true until the Americans began
to build roads again in 1916. The colonial régime had left a legacy
of bridges, public buildings, parks, irrigation ditches; practically
every improvement of this nature crumbled in slow decay and was
not replaced. The temperate Dr. Brown closed his account of the 114
Haiti of 1836 with the following paragraph: 105

> To sum up all that might be said upon the actual condition of Hayti, poverty and degradation stare one in the face wherever he goes—and the state of the whole island will be fully understood in the United States when it is bluntly asserted, that the country is one continuous negro village, built of mud cabins, and unfurnished with the usual comforts of life. The population is, with small exceptions, an indolent, naked multitude, without sustenance or a disposition to make exertions to obtain it; without enormous vices, but petty and insignificant in every thing relating to human character, and not many removes from the tribes upon the Niger in point of civilization. The fact is indisputable, that as a nation the blacks of Saint Domingo are in a retrograde movement as regards intellectual improvement, and no obstacle seems to exist to prevent this descent to barbarism. The government and institutions of the country must for the present remain unstable, and it is difficult to pronounce what the changes involved in the future will produce.[20]

Progress, as Westerners understand it, comes through contacts and 177
competition, both of which were lacking to Haiti in large measure 178
throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. While externally

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[19] Franklin, op. cit., p. 396.
[20] Op. cit., II, 288–289.

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177 the country slowly became dilapidated, its economic and social insti-
178 tutions were taking on the unplanned characteristics already described. The only disturbing element in Haitian life was that of political machinations by ambitious military men. When these reached a peak in 1915 the United States intervened. For the first time in a century, really, the Haitian came into contact with the outside world.

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PART IV

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

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3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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XII

POLITICS

TO write of the politics of one country in the language of 040
another is almost certain to foster misconceptions. Political terminology grows out of national and local experience, so that a Liberal party may actually be reactionary, a Radical group conservative, and a Conservative bloc progressive; the names are entirely the product of time and circumstance. And to generalize upon the shades of political opinion in a country is almost surely to do violence to partisan sentiment, as well as to truth itself. If, on the other hand, one attempts to deal justly with each development of political thought, one is immediately caught in the web of tedious detail.

All these reflections apply to Haiti. Her political history is end- 175
lessly complicated, not only in the sequence of events, but in the 114
intertwining prejudices of color, caste, sectionalism, education, heritage. Haitian writers have concerned themselves more frequently with politics than with any other subject; their diagnoses and remedies are familiar to the thought of élite citizens. Yet it is doubtful whether these authors have ever affected the political reality, except possibly in 1843. Theory and practice have consistently diverged: both form a part of the political complexion of Haiti, yet to treat either in detail would require an overbalanced discussion of political matters in a country nine tenths of whose people are normally unconcerned with politics. Let us then try to discover briefly how rulers have achieved and lost power, and how they have managed their government.

Of all the social institutions which had to find their own shape in 175
1804 upon the achievement of independence, the one for which the 178
people as a whole had least preparation was government. Assuming
the major institutions of a society to consist of economic life, govern- 64
ment, religion, and marriage, one realizes the problems which faced the free Haitians in all of these categories. Satisfactory or partial, we have seen the solutions arrived at in all respects except government—solutions which modified and adapted old French colonial practice or African tradition. Neither French nor African guides would serve in politics, however. People who have just thrown off the yoke of a

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178 slave system are not likely to assume it again; and the aristocrats,
64 ever intent upon forgetting their African forebears, would certainly
not turn to the Dark Continent for political inspiration.

175 Although the revolution had brought to the fore men of military
642 experience and even genius, it had driven out or killed every single
person of experience in civil government. The affranchis of the old
701 régime had been denied political rights long before 1791; by 1804
643 few could have had any memory of active participation in government.[1]
Toussaint was dead. The only authority of any significance was military. Consequently the new state was built upon army control and directed by army officers. Dessalines as commander in chief took the title of governor-general, later of emperor, but was in reality a military ruler. Fearful as he was of a new French invasion, he set his generals over the districts, organized his people as an army ready for immediate mobilization, and ruled as dictator.

This was all the Haitians had as political background: a military
175 dictatorship. The Founding Fathers of Haiti, if so they might be
642 called, had almost nothing to work with, nothing to build upon:
neither a Magna Carta of the Blacks, nor any precedent of an independent Negro state anywhere in this white man's world; neither heritage of local responsibility and political debate to sow the seeds of democracy, nor any example of self-government in the American tropics to offer a pattern[2]—many of the known forms of government were a practical impossibility for the Haitians because of their need of continued defense against foreign enemies, their slave heritage, their inexperience in self-government, their complete lack of a middle class.

175 Hardly one tenth of the people in any case was capable of giving
668 detailed thought to the form which government should take. The
mass of ex-slaves had been fighting only *against* slavery, against the
hated white rulers, not *for* democracy or any other abstraction. Their
freedom achieved, they would not be the ones to make decisions.
[642] All political choices would be made by the generals, by men of
property and position, by the few whose persistent ambition made
them stand out from the masses.

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[1] Such participation in French colonial politics would have been before the restrictive laws of 1771.

[2] It must be recalled that Haiti was the second free country to be established in the Western Hemisphere, and that Liberia, in Africa, was still far in the future.

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SV3 Haiti SV3

175 643 Immediately a division of political opinion was evident, one which was to persist throughout the century. No one denied the inevitability in 1804 of making Dessalines the head of state: he was the victorious commander, clearly the most powerful man in Haiti. The division of opinion arose over the manner in which he should rule, whether as military dictator, or as a responsible president. Dessalines settled the matter peremptorily—if only for the time being—by asserting himself as a dictator.

175 642 [663] The issue did not die with his decision, however, for it had deep roots. Supporting Dessalines wholeheartedly was the group of generals who were all Negroes, all ex-slaves, all practically illiterate. The three most influential of these blacks were Christophe, later to succeed his general; Clanlette, and Boisrond-Tonnère. Those who preferred a government in which the president shared power with a legislature of important men were, on the contrary, almost all affranchis of the old régime, therefore the most cultured and educated men in the country. Most of them were mulattoes or at least of a lighter complexion than the Negroes, although of course some blacks adhered to their position. The leaders of this group were Pétion, Boyer, Inginac, and Gérin. This division of opinion went back even into the decade preceding independence, when the island, free of slavery, was still technically under the rule of France, and the ex-slave Toussaint had to fight and conquer the mulatto leader Rigaud before he could establish his rule as dictator.

175 643 642 66 For a brief moment after independence, all differences were reconciled, since all had been united in a common cause against the enemy. Dessalines was then commanding in the Artibonite Valley, and Christophe in the North; two of Rigaud's former lieutenants, Pétion and Geffrard, commanded in the West and South. Apparently there was genuine respect among these men for each other. Dessalines, for example, with evident sincerity calls his colleague Pétion "that man of upright heart." The unity was short-lived, however. Not only was it evident that Dessalines meant to rule like an African despot-chief, taking advice only when he liked it; it was even more plain that through his cruelty, impetuosity, and crudeness he was bent on isolating Haiti from all contacts with the culture and polish of the outer world. Pétion and his group looked on with pained disgust as he indulged his violence against the whites who had hopefully remained in the country; the general's bloody procession throughout

175 the land, leaving a trail of misery and death, was an augury of what
643 to expect from a tyrant. They opposed his plan to destroy all coastal
642 towns and move the people inland where, protected by their mountains,
they would be immune to foreign attack and foreign ideas.
66 They resented their loss of property by state expropriation, and could not fail to be shocked by the grim exultation of Boisrond-Tonnère: "To draw up the act of independence, we used the skin of a white man for parchment, his skull for an inkstand, his blood for ink, and a bayonet for pen!"[3]

Even without such cogent objections to Dessalines the mulattoes would have opposed his dictatorship, for as intellectuals and as social élite they wanted a real share in the government. For this they had agitated since before 1791, and it would be a grim irony if after fourteen years of intermittent conflict the successful expulsion of whites should be followed by a continued exclusion of mulattoes from the government. It would be a worse irony to throw off the white yoke only to take on a black one. When in 1805 Dessalines made himself emperor they asked for the creation of a nobility, thinking to share the rule with him; but the Emperor's curt "*Moi seul je suis noble*" dashed this hope. Although detailed proof is lacking, it is generally accepted in Haiti that the conspiracies against the Emperor's life began with this intransigent statement.

Here, then, was the issue which in half a dozen varying forms was to split political opinion for decades: rule by a single tyrant vs. rule by the cultured class. It even made two nations of one between the years 1806 and 1820.

When Dessalines was assassinated, a Constituent Assembly was
175 summoned to draw up a new constitution and select a new ruler.
642 The mulattoes were in control of the Assembly which under Pétion's
skilful guidance sat at the mulatto stronghold, Port-au-Prince, and
there drew up a constitution assuring the limitation of the president's
power by a Senate, and requiring election and reëlection of the
[667] president instead of permitting him life tenure. This achieved, the
Assembly dutifully elected the black general Christophe president of
Haiti. However, belonging as he did to Dessalines' school of thought
—unrestricted rule by a strong man—he indignantly refused to be
bound by such a constitution; when the Assembly, instead of yielding

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[3] This statement is cited, with evident distaste, by Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, III, 114.

to his demands for revision and for his selection as president for life, 175
retained the constitution they had written and chose Pétion president 642
in his stead, the rupture was instant and complete. [667]

Dictator as against restricted president, strong man as against class
or group rule, Negro against mulatto, army against civil govern- 175
ment, executive against legislature, North against South—these are 665
the phases of the subsequent dichotomy in Haitian politics.

A good case can easily be made for the advocates of force in
Haitian government, particularly in its early days. For years the 175
majority of men had lost the habit of steady work on the land; a 642
strong hand was needed to reëstablish in the countryside that eco- 433
nomic order without which liberty shrivels. The people had become
accustomed to taking orders from their military leaders, and these 656
from their commanding officer. Those, moreover, were times of crisis, when France might suddenly descend again upon her former colony: few crises can be dealt with by debating societies. Looking back on the course of Haitian history, one may point out also that the country prospered under the dictatorships of Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe as it never did under the limited presidencies.[4]

In 1806, therefore, the aristocratic party got its wish, although only 175
at the price of splitting the country in two. They established a 642
government with a president of their own and a Senate filled with
their representatives. The earliest legislation naturally enough fav- 665
ored their own landholding group. When prosperity did not result, 646
Pétion began to recommend to the Senate a division of the land. 643
More and more, although the representative form was preserved, Pétion ruled as a dictator. He was mild enough not to arouse antagonism; as is always the case when freedom of speech is curbed and summary legislation required, the plea of crisis was used to justify extraordinary measures.

The legislative party was firmly in the saddle by 1820 when Boyer 175
reunited North and South, and shared his power with the Senate. 642
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[4] The argument for dictatorship is familiar to the modern world. A defense of "totalitarianism," published in 1816 by authority of Christophe (then King Henry I), [829]
is amusingly like certain European utterances of the nineteen-thirties: "The King has the sweet satisfaction of seeing that the cultivators [who were forced to work on the land whether they wanted to or not], being everywhere regularly paid [though the sum might be tiny], are praising the freedom they enjoy." And again: "Hayti chose a kingdom in order to shun forever that chaos, that confusion and perpetual clashing, which result from those monstrous associations known under the name of *popular bodies*." Anon., *Haytian Papers* (1816), pp. 109, 113.

175 Since he was president for twenty-five years (normal ones, as things
642 go in Haiti), it is worth while to examine the functioning of the
643 kind of government the upper class favored.

President Boyer's education and outlook were wholly French. He
175 had formed his views of government principally upon French
642 models, yet when he became head of state he could not forget his
643 own military career. He said repeatedly that he wished to supersede
692 the military by the civil power, but somehow never got around to it. The country was full of black generals, and it would have been difficult to retire them, primarily because they were black. He established courts to insure the rights of man, but since his newborn judiciary lacked the prestige to command respect, interpretation of the law came from the President—until before long he was himself the law. With a logic characteristic of the French, he tried to make the whole administration of the country orderly and tidy by codifying laws, laying out spheres of governmental departments, and properly ticketing matters in general. He had to be the sole judge of the intention and operation of statutes, however, and if necessary modify the nature of an act to suit his view of the public need. His honest and generally upright character perhaps made his enormous prerogatives conducive to the public good; but Boyer was a dictator in spite of his Senate, since when he found a law working badly he simply turned it from its normal course and gave it a quite contrary effect.

[646] As the years of his long rule proceeded, he took more power to himself. When his Senate would not pass bills as he proposed them,
[661] he waited until they adjourned and then either neglected to execute their laws, or instructed the government printing office to change the wording. He clearly regarded the legislature as a necessary nuisance, to be kept as a sop to the élite and to preserve the appearance of republicanism before the world. Representatives from the various communes were recommended by the President, his nomination amounting almost always to election.[3]

660 Boyer was overthrown by the Revolution of 1843, by all odds the

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[643] [3] The task of governing the whole island was obviously heavier than governing a fraction of it, so Boyer may have felt justified in his departures from strict constitutionality. He was always an indefatigable worker, whose intentions were uniformly laudable. He tried to rule alone, as had his illustrious predecessors. The hitch came because he was not of their calibre. He was worthy, virtuous—and mediocre. He would probably have made an excellent mayor of a French provincial town.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

Boyer was overthrown by the Revolution of 1843, by all odds the

most important of Haitian upheavals. Since its effects were to be felt 175
for the next seventy years in the extinction of representative govern- 669
ment and the eclipse of the élite as political rulers, it is worthy of special attention. Paradoxically, it was a revolution fomented by the élite themselves. Its background and outcome reveal the power in word, and the impotence in deed, of this group by 1843.

The constitution of 1816, devised by Pétion's henchmen, had 175
granted the president initiative in all laws except those concerning 642
taxation. After the agreement of 1825 with France,[6] however, Boyer, 643
hard pressed by the need of paying the indemnity each year, began 652
to restrict the number of officials, diminish their salaries, and veto all
projects favorable to the development of public instruction and im- 661
provement which might cause further expenditure. By temperament he was an autocrat.[7] Every valuable measure must come from him alone; whatever another person proposed he would find a thousand reasons to discard. Sarcastic and vain, he did not know how to smooth ruffled feelings or make conflicting groups reconcile their differences. His personal weaknesses of character alienated the sympathies of many once-devoted officials.

During his long presidency Boyer also systematically ignored the 175
younger generation, men who admired the efforts of Pétion, ardent
reformers who wished to devote their energies to the improvement 643
of Haiti. The military career had no attraction for them: the higher 665
ranks, alone bringing sufficient salary for a congenial way of life, were too few and one could achieve them only with difficulty, for since 1825 advancement had been submitted to rigorous rules. On the other hand, the paths of administration were severely guarded by those admirable great functionaries left over from the government of Pétion—men like Inginac and Imbert. But age had slowed their activity, and still Boyer kept them on. The younger generation mocked this "gerontocracy" and supported the parliamentary opposition.

The youth of the élite class continued to go to France for their 175
education, returning to Haiti to take part in the lively political dis- 665
cussions which made one of their chief occupations. During the first 871
decade of Boyer's administration they generally supported him, for 664

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[6] By which France recognized the independence of Haiti in return for the payment of a large annual indemnity.

[7] "In everything, he wishes to dominate," Pétion had said of him.

175 he seemed to be leading the country to progressive action; about
665 1830, however, a group better educated and more ambitious than
664 their predecessors arose. Nourished on ideas acquired in France, they
871 were shocked on their return by the miseries and governmental inaction which prevailed in Haiti. True, when Boyer pressed them to suggest constructive measures of reform they had little to suggest. Like many other critics they were better at tearing down than at building up.

175 By the constitution of 1816 they had the right of free speech and
642 press, and made use of it to publish journals of criticism—*Le Phare*,
Le Télégraphe, *La Feuille de Commerce*. Their sustained criticism kept
204 alive the parliamentary opposition and gave it a focus; they were at
208 least partially responsible for the Revolution of 1843. In spite of their
665 diatribes, Boyer did not suppress these newspapers. If he had done so it is possible the Revolution might have come sooner. Not every dictator-president would permit such boldness as the following paragraph which appeared in 1843 in *Le Patriote*, an adversary of Boyer's own journal *Le Temps:*

> Let one look well at the things which are happening among us and then say whether, considering our first steps along the path, our progress has not been constantly slowed up now for some time, and whether this does not lead to a state of things in our country in which the most vital part of our civilization is struck by an immobility, almost a paralysis. Haiti is stationary, is retrograde: we need no other proof of it than this frightful uncertainty about the future which so deeply disturbs all serious minds and sincere patriots.

175 In 1838 Hérard Dumesle, president of the Chamber and a leader of
665 the opposition, drew up and secured the passage of an "Address to
the President of the Republic," which expressed certain just ideas of
646 progress and pointed out that failure to achieve it was due to the
643 mistakes of the administration. It was a bitterly critical and some-
664 times passionate document. Boyer was intensely angry and proceeded to violate the constitution: relying on the majority always at his disposal in the Chamber, he excluded from among the deputies those most hostile to his government.[8] But at the election of 1842 the communes of Les Cayes, Aquin, and Jérémie reëlected the expelled representatives, so confirming their criticism of the President.

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[8] Hérard Dumesle, Lochard, Lartigue, and David Saint-Preux.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

When the Chamber of 1842 assembled Boyer once more forced the elimination of these men and several of their political friends.[9] The majority in the Chamber was so agitated over this expulsion that only twenty-eight out of seventy-two deputies thereafter appeared at any session. A dozen communes, among them the most important in the country (Port-au-Prince, Les Cayes, Gonaïves, Santo Domingo), had no representation. The deputies of the South avenged themselves by instituting a series of "patriotic banquets." At the plantations of adversaries of the government dinners were given for dozens of guests; the meals were followed by vibrant speeches, full of criticisms of the government. Thanks to the talent of these orators, the opposition likewise gradually filtered its way into the mass of the people, slowly but implacably undermining Boyer's government.

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The President also had bad luck to contend with. During his presidency many catastrophies saddened the country. The arsenal blew up in 1827, burning the state warehouses and causing a loss of 5,000,000 piastres. A cyclone in 1831 desolated the South. Fires in 1832 and 1843 practically wiped out Port-au-Prince. An earthquake in 1842 shook the whole island, destroyed Santiago and Port-de-Paix, and transformed Cap-Haïtien into a mass of ruins; the fire which broke out in consequence was accompanied by pillaging which went on for several days. The parliamentary opposition to Boyer made use of these natural calamities to sharpen displeasure at the government.

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In August, 1842, a secret association, The Society of the Rights of Man and of Citizen, was formed at Les Cayes to exploit this discontent and prepare the fall of Boyer. It circulated clandestinely throughout the South the ringing Manifesto by Praslin, a résumé of the charges of the opposition which was soon covered with signatures. When adherents of the society were numerous enough, an executive committee was formed with the commandant Rivière Hérard as president. At the end of January, 1843, an uprising occurred on the Praslin plantation.[10] General Borgella, head of the department of the South, proved irresolute; the insurrection, fostered by this indecision, spread rapidly among the troops, even generals joining in. By Febru-

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[9] The most important of the excluded deputies were Dumai Lespinasse, Covin Aîné, Dominique, Benoît, Ponthieux, Dumainville Dautant.

[10] At Torbeck, in the department of the South.

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669 ary, 1843, Boyer realized that it was futile to oppose the revolution-
[645] aries and departed for exile, going by way of Jamaica to Paris.
[159] Now came the test of the revolutionary leaders.[11] The state was in
their hands; their own representative, Rivière Hérard, was the new
175 president. They proceeded to concoct a ridiculously naïve constitu-
642 tion which by granting a popular vote alienated large bodies of their
648 mulatto support; to insult the black army leaders; and to allow the
669 defeat of Haitian forces by Dominican revolutionaries, thus losing two thirds of the island's area. Every act weakened the party favoring representative government. Within a year Rivière was ousted and a black general was ruling Haiti with a rod of iron. The Revolution of 1843 from which so much was expected had by its very success ruined the parliamentarians, for with power in their hands they showed themselves utterly inept.

175 A succession of black generals now came to the presidency. When
642 Faustin Soulouque became president in 1847, the fourth Negro
643 within four years, and made himself emperor two years later, Haiti found herself once more back at the strong-man principle. The élite were out of office, relegated to inferiority in all phases of political life.

175 In the middle of the nineteenth century the groups upholding the
665 conflicting principles in politics became organized political parties.
565 Those favoring parliamentary rule called themselves Liberals; those believing in the sole rule of a strong dictator were called Nationalists. But by no stretch of the imagination could the Liberal party be considered democratic. The noble principles expressed in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the American Declaration of Independence were uncongenial to Haiti. One of the prime tenets of the Liberals, indeed, was that men were not created equal; rather that certain men (the élite) were clearly the superiors of others. Liberty

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[175] [11] The revolution was almost wholly an affair of the élite caste. The mulatto Boyer
[669] was deposed, and the mulatto Rivière Hérard took his place. If anyone thought of the peasants, it was only to use them to manipulate and manoeuvre the "outs" into office. Boyer's secretary-general, deposed along with the President, appealed to his countrymen against their accusation of treason against him, saying "My last wishes will be for the prosperity of Haiti and the regeneration of the African caste, to which I have consecrated myself wholeheartedly for forty years, without ever thinking of my own interests." (Joseph Balthazar Inginac, *Message à ses compatriotes, et principalement à ceux qui ont dirigé les affaires populaires de la république depuis la fin de Janvier dernier* [Port-au-Prince, March 18, 1843], p. 4). Yet if these are more than hopeful words, they refer only to the distribution of the land which made peasants of the "African caste," and to Inginac's pamphlets on how to raise coffee and other products—which none of the peasants could read.

was well enough, but all upper-class landlords wanted the privilege 175
of living in leisure on an income derived from the menial labor of 665
black workers. Fraternity was a principle ridiculous to a group whose 565
never-ceasing struggle was to confirm the separation of castes. The term "Liberal," then, was borrowed not from the revolutionary documents of the late eighteenth century, but from the parliamentary parties of the nineteenth—those who saw more opportunity for themselves and their group if the power of tyrants and kings could be curbed by legislatures. The idea was particularly congenial to the Haitian intelligentsia for the simple reason that the powerful rulers of Haiti, past and present, were Negroes who did not share the aims and ideals of the social upper class.[12]

By holding such "liberal" views, the mulatto élite saw their one 175
opportunity not only for curbing the strong men among the Negroes 565
who again and again tried to rule Haiti as if it were a native African 646
state and themselves the supreme chieftains, but also for indulging 665
their own special penchants. A Senate filled with élite politicians 664
suited the talents of the educated aristocrats. They liked constitutions and codes; the law was their favorite profession; they were adepts at drawing neat distinctions between this and that in an academic issue; polished oratory, skilful argument, fluent speech were knacks peculiar to them by temperament, position, education. Boyer had been the beau-ideal of the academic "liberals," with his talkative Senate, his complete set of Codes and national system of courts; the mid-century party members came to realize what they had lost by driving him out.

Every time the Nationalists came to power the colored élite 175
suffered. Under Dessalines they lost greatly in property and position; 661
Christophe had hated and hounded them; Soulouque put many of 565
their leaders to death. The only monarchs Haiti ever had were 643
blacks, and the two most tyrannical presidents in the first seventy-five years after independence were Nationalists (Pierrot, 1845–46, and Domingue, 1874–76).

The experience of the Liberal presidents with parliamentary insti- 175
tutions was not entirely a happy one, however. Pétion and Boyer had 643

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[12] It must be recalled that no parliaments of England, France, or the United States [646]
in the early nineteenth century had true democratic representation. Property qualifi- [171]
cations for voting, rotten boroughs, and the persistence of privilege ensured that only the "classes" should have full representation, and so rule the masses.

Pétion and Boyer had

175 643 646 642 suavity enough to rule constitutionally with a Senate which, since class interests were being served by the executive, did not curb their virtual dictatorships. Later presidents had more difficulty. Geffrard, for example, elected as a Liberal after the fall of Soulouque's grim empire, had made parliamentary government a battle cry of his campaign. In office, however, he was continually at loggerheads [669] with his Senate, until he exercised his presidential privilege of dissolving it; in the end a revolution overthrew the Liberal parliamentarian because he had become a dictator. So with his successor Salnave (1867–69), likewise a Liberal, who almost immediately upon inauguration found it impossible to work with such a group of talkers. So once more with Nissage-Saget (1870–74), who followed Salnave: a professed believer in legislative responsibility, he refused to yield to the legislature on any important matter. A black Nationalist succeeded for two years, ruling despotically. Then came the last of the Liberal presidents, Boisrond-Canal (1876–79). This man was apparently determined to allow his legislature its full constitutional rights. As a result Haiti had more talk in the capital, and less action, than in almost any régime up to that time; then, as Montague says, "convinced that the constitutional régime was a failure, Haiti's most scrupulous president resigned in disgust."[13]

175 665 669 [666] The Liberal party virtually disappeared from the scene in 1883, after two abortive coups by their leader of the moment, Boyer Bazelais. The first occurred in 1879 when the retiring President, Boisrond-Canal, gave Haiti one of her very rare honest elections, resulting in the choice of the Nationalist candidate Salomon. Bazelais and his men forsook their professed principles, rising in arms to seize power. They were suppressed. Four years later when the moment again seemed auspicious Bazelais led another revolution, which the President so effectively crushed that the leader himself was killed. The leaderless Liberals were no longer effective competitors in presidential politics. From that time until the American Occupation, the élite were out of power. One president only during those thirty-five years was a mulatto: Tancrède Auguste, one of the weakest rulers in Haitian history. He died, presumably poisoned, after eight months of office.

660 The era from 1883 to 1915 was Haiti's worst, politically. Revo-

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[13] Ludwell L. Montague, *Haiti and the United States, 1714–1938* (Durham, 1940), p. 18.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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The era from 1883 to 1915 was Haiti's worst, politically. Revolution succeeded revolution; the country sank deep into graft and scandal; foreign powers made Haiti debase herself before them. Some of the élite, backed by foreign merchants resident in the country, went so far as to urge annexation by the United States rather than endure continued disorder in economics and degradation in social life. They felt matters had come to such a pass that only so radical a change could clean the Augean stables. This was the period of a succession of political pamphlets[14] written by élite thinkers to set forth the necessary steps of reform. Every president was a black autocrat, holding power by his control over the masses. If an occasional one was more than mediocre (Hyppolite, for example), his good qualities were sure to be more than offset by the ignorant boors (such as Nord Alexis) who followed him.

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True, even the most incompetent of the Negro presidents was obliged to employ a few élite, for literacy was necessary in the foreign office if nowhere else. The aristocrats were impotent, however, for Haitian problems had tremendously increased at the very period when they were losing control of government policy. Reforms were imperative, as every member of the élite knew; but no black president saw the need, or seeing it, had the vaguest idea how to proceed toward effecting them. Beyond the shameful disgrace of Haiti's position in the world of independent nations, the thoughtful could glimpse the anarchy which must inevitably result from continued ineffectiveness.

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Reforms were not forthcoming. Rather, anarchy came, bringing international complications in its wake. The American Marines occupied the country. An era was ended.

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It had been a strange journey in political ideas from the time of Pétion and Christophe to that of the Occupation. The early leaders seemed to envision triumphs for Haiti in a world of great powers, and to see themselves as men with a mission. After Boyer the vision dimmed. We have Soulouque, whose tinsel empire was mere stage setting for the act of a neighborhood bully; the tyrant Domingue; the senile Nord Alexis; the utterly incompetent fly-by-nights in the decade before the Occupation. Even Geffrard the reformer, prob- ovo

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[14] Among the most lucid of these were: Démesvar Delorme, *La Misère au sein des richesses* (1873); Edmond Paul, *Les Causes de nos malheurs* (1882); Léonidas Laventure, *Haïti: le danger de la patrie* (1893); Alcius Charmant, *Haïti, vivra-t-elle?* (1905); and Auguste Magloire, *L'Erreur révolutionnaire et notre état social* (1909).

175 643 661 Even Geffrard the reformer, probably the ablest president in the second half-century, who was pledged to reduce the expenses of government (a promise which, since he was accustomed to a life of penury, should have been easy to fulfill), increased his own salary to $50,000 a year, and allowed himself $20,000 more annually for secret service and a similar sum "for the encouragement of arts and sciences." He bought two estates with government money; the meat bill of his family was charged to the budget of his bodyguard, and the family champagne bill to a hospital. After Geffrard, the presidency was openly regarded as the juiciest financial plum in Haiti which, if one could pluck it, would justify the necessary expenditures for a revolution. It seems from contemporary comment, indeed, that Geffrard's actions aroused not censure but rather envy, as if every ambitious Haitian would have welcomed the opportunity to do likewise. The bitingly critical Englishman, Sir Spenser St. John, railed with some justice, "Every Haitian appears fully persuaded that his countrymen never seek office except for the purpose of improving their private fortunes."[13]

175 643 646 The legislature was never a real check upon the President. It was useful to him at times when he wished to delay action on some embarrassing imbroglio with a foreign power, for by referring a measure to the Senate he could stall it in tedious debate. Almost without exception, however, the legislature consisted of the President's men. Its halls were palaces of idle oratory. One whole session was devoted to a discussion of fitting the hall with cushioned seats; another to the propriety of appointing an interpreter for representatives who understood only Créole and not French. To make a man a Senator was a satisfactory way of paying a political debt. To be a Senator was to have social prominence, a salary of $1,600 (decidedly a competence in nineteenth-century Haiti), an opportunity to speak before an audience—and no real responsibility.

175 One may grant without debate the difficulties facing this small and poor country, a Negro state with great white neighbors who regarded it with something less than deference. Yet Haiti in its early days had real promise. Wherein lay its defects? Haitian thinkers knew the answers, and frequently indicted themselves.

175 871 565 658 The want of education was a basic weakness. Those who believe in democracy need no rehearsal of the benefits of popular enlightenment. Because the great Negro heads of state were themselves im-

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[13] *Hayti, or the Black Republic*, p. 183.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

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perfectly educated, and because other matters seemed infinitely more pressing than the setting up of schools, the early Haitians, united in 1804, fell apart within a single generation. On one hand were the élite and a few other townspeople who knew at least something of the outside world; on the other the masses of toiling countryfolk to whom tiny Haitian valleys were the whole universe. The young men of these two classes coming to power could not understand each other; they could not make concessions to each other; and as they fought for what they held true, each grew suspicious of the other if not permanently hostile. The lack of common understanding might still have been repaired in any one generation, but no single president had the vision to inaugurate universal education. Aside from the expense, certain powerful élite citizens often expressed their doubts as to the educability of the peasants; as property owners they would undoubtedly have objected to the unsettling of the economic order, which was based upon the work of an ignorant mass of blacks.[16]

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Without education, the political sphere went unenriched by any flow of new blood from the people. Politics existed in a vacuum. The earthy, candid criticisms of a politically conscious folk never invigorated the discussion of national affairs. Without education, the people had no standards of comparison of Haiti with other nations, and were the easy dupes of whatever insurrectionary agitator could persuade them that their daily woes were caused by the current administration. Without education, high political office became a prerogative of the few, a contest between the Ins and the Outs, a path to personal wealth. Without education, Haiti could never be more than a dictatorship by a man or a clique, her stability endangered with the downfall of each incumbent, for dictatorships rarely provide for continuity in government.

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Another great weakness was the notion that national happiness could be achieved by political means primarily. After the germinal ideas of Christophe and Pétion, which had a basis in economic behavior, hardly another important concept came out of a century of presidents. Haitian politicians have been great arrangers: they have given the country eighteen constitutions and innumerable codes, all admirable in their loving solicitude for precise detail. The common feeling of political aspirants has been, "If we are given power, all will

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[16] This argument is clearly stated in Madiou, op. cit., III, 196 ff.

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178 prosper." Yet every change of administration saw merely a new
181 embroidery on the old theme of sterility.[17]

175 The further weakness of social or class consciousness has already
565 been treated at length. It kept the whole nation divided from top to bottom, setting black against colored, North against South, countryside against town. It meant a perennial civil war, latent at times, but constantly breaking out in new insurrections.

175 Some day a diligent scholar may try to catalogue the revolutions
669 which Haiti has undergone. Magloire discusses sixty-nine "impor-
701 tant" ones between 1806 and 1879;[18] but the latter date was merely the threshold of renewed revolutionary activity. There seems to have been very little pattern in these uprisings, except that almost never were they a spontaneous revolt of the masses, as the Slave Insurrection of 1791 had been. The peasants were constantly being impressed into service with the army of a general who had presidential ambitions. From the middle years of the nineteenth century certain peasants found fighting a more profitable trade than any other, and began to hire themselves out as mercenaries. In the North these professional guerrilla warriors were known as *cacos*, in the South as *piquets*. Their methods were those of terror and rapine. They were a constant menace to the peace, and their suppression was one of the announced purposes of the American Occupation, for every revolutionary chief felt it necessary to hire their services.

175 Another recognized procedure of revolution was incendiarism.
369 Haitian politics is almost wholly the affair of townsmen, and more
669 narrowly of the men of the six important towns—Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien, Jérémie, Les Cayes, Gonaïves, and Saint-Marc. Except for their principal buildings and villas, these towns are constructed of wood or other inflammable material. Leaders of insurrections therefore have habitually set fire to the poorer sections of the towns, and as frequently as not this threat has won over the populace, who preferred overthrowing the government to having their homes burned. Support of the insurrection becomes a form of fire insurance. Such a state of affairs is eloquent testimony to the cynical attitude of the political leaders toward the masses.

A revolution directed by a general of real ambition was likely to

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[17] Auguste Magloire, *Histoire d'Haïti d'après un plan nouveau* (Port-au-Prince, 1909), I, 230, 243, 250-251, develops this theme at length.

[18] *Ibid.*, Vol. II.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

A revolution directed by a general of real ambition was likely to involve an appeal to foreign powers. Haiti being almost roadless, 175 ships were important for moving troops and blockading seaports. 669 Many a chieftain has purchased six or eight ships abroad, and with 648 this "navy" won his fight. Financial intrigue was frequent. By borrowing 457 money from France, Germany, or England, with the promise [491] to reshape Haitian financial policy to the benefit of the creditor [505] country, several revolutionaries have secured funds for arms and the necessary soldiers to effect a coup. Sooner or later also one might expect to see the Môle Saint Nicolas, which guards the Windward Passage pathway between Cuba and Haiti, come into the picture. Cession of the Mole has frequently been held out as bait for foreign support, but popular opposition to white ownership of any Haitian land has always stopped actual cession. When Haiti's debt to Germany was due, she borrowed from France to pay it, and then later borrowed from the United States to pay France. All such appeals to foreign powers have merely drawn attention to the defenseless position of the country; many a successful revolutionary chief has lived to regret his appeal for aid.[19]

The one time between 1804 and 1915 when political opinion was 175 vocal and truly significant was in the latter years of Boyer's administration. 665 Then it took pains to attack specific evils with steady persistence, 208 even though the cures suggested were vague. Yet after the successful elimination of Boyer, politicians who had worked so brilliantly in the opposition showed themselves even more incapable. Political thought, at a low ebb for the next forty years, revived only when, after 1883, the Liberals were eliminated from politics. Their complete defeat seems to have given élite thinkers time for sober reflection upon the plight of their country. Before 1843 the critics had been in a position to make their words effective; after 1883 they wrote—soberly, brilliantly, persuasively—but their books and pamphlets were read only by a small group of fellow aristocrats who already thought as they did, or disagreed with them in print. Political homilies made no impression upon the minds of the peasants left uneducated by all the élite presidents of Haiti.

In the crucial days of the American Occupation, once again political [648] debate rose to brilliant heights. The rude shock of seeing foreign

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[19] See, on this whole subject of Haiti's foreign relations, an excellent chapter in Montague, op. cit., chap. IX.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 whites patrolling the streets seems to have given reality to criticism
665 which before then would have been academic. The élite were back
208 again in the political forum. Unreflecting patriotism urged the
648 immediate withdrawal of the Marines, but a considerable number of
the legislature saw that it would be years before they left. The problem, then, they saw variously: some wished to be eloquent spokesmen for the patriotic anti-whites and did their best to embarrass the Occupation; some, feeling that the Americans were benefiting the country, tried to make things move smoothly; while others, seeing a fertile field for gain, tried to ingratiate themselves with the American authorities.

175 The twenty years between 1915 and 1934 heard many eloquent,
643 impassioned speeches, not all of them coming to the same conclu-
642 sions. The élite were divided in most issues raised by the Occupation,
648 so that the old neat dichotomy between élite and army no longer
662 prevailed. The President, Dartiguenave (1915–22), was for the first
time since 1879 a Southerner and a mulatto; yet in 1922 when he was a candidate for reëlection it was Southern élite votes which defeated him. Executive, legislature, and judiciary all had just enough power under the Occupation to make subtle manoeuvres, and all three branches of the government displayed a real genius for the political game. They often succeeded in putting the onus of an unpopular act upon the Americans, and in taking the credit for popular measures with which they had had little to do. They prodded and pricked all the weaknesses in the logic of the American State Department. They forced numerous concessions. If at times they seem to have been overclever, playing the game of politics merely for an opportunity to display their skill, at other times many of them showed a deep understanding of realities which had to be faced.

175 The Occupation, ordered by that high prophet of democracy,
648 Woodrow Wilson, professed its determination to give Haiti her
666 first opportunity to be democratic. Yet the *Marines* really dictated
642 the choice both of Dartiguenave in 1915 and of Borno in 1922 and
1926. The constitution of 1918 was prepared in Washington; it was submitted to a plebiscite, but the farcical vote—69,337 for and 335 against—was clearly the result of electioneering by the Marines. The presidents of Haiti ruled with executive councils, subject to Ameri-

can "advice and approval," rather than with the legislature subject to 175
popular control. Even under such restrictions the politically minded 648
found ways of exerting pressure on the Marine authorities. 666

Out of the darkest days of military subjection by a foreign power 642
came a changed order of politics in the country. The practically unbroken 175
line of dull incompetents who had come into the presidency 643
ended; instead of ignorant army leaders, educated men were once
more in office; instead of Northern Negroes, élites of Port-au-Prince;
instead of benighted martinets bewildered by world affairs, men
who, if not great statesmen, at least had minds capable of understanding
Haiti's relation to international economics and politics.

The élite were back in power. In the mind of every friend of Haiti 175
arose the question whether the events between 1879 and 1915 had 642
taught them lessons which would make their return to responsibility
productive of great things for the country. Because of the abnormal
situation resulting from the Occupation, the world depression, and
the briefness of their new ascendancy, one cannot yet speak with
assurance. Nevertheless, there are few encouraging signs. Political [661]
office is still regarded by most candidates in terms of their own [666]
advancement rather than service to Haiti. Very little has been done [565]
to extend the base of voting by developing local responsibility and
education among the masses. Élite youths still receive a classical
education, still disdain manual labor, still cherish the ideal of a
graceful life of ease. The president still rules as an autocrat supported [643]
by the gendarmerie—substitute for the army of former days. One [565]
can see no decrease in social distinctions or in the disdain of the élite
for peasant people; on the contrary, there has even been an increase
of this feeling because the Occupation (through its Agricultural
Service particularly) seemed to open paths of development to the
peasants. Social antagonism, not social responsibility, still underlies
political life.[20]

To every one of these strictures there is a plausible reply. It is no 178
light matter to unsettle the minds of nine tenths of a population by 65
education, to cause an economic revolution by improving agricultural
techniques, to admit to political life a people unaccustomed to

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[20] Dr. Jean Price-Mars, in *La Vocation de l'élite* (Port-au-Prince, 1919), passim, especially pp. 51 ff., urges the élite to accept their responsibilities rather than rest upon the debilitating assurance of their innate superiority. [114] [565]

178 it. Moreover, the Haitian budget is in the neighborhood of seven
65 million dollars, for which sum not much in the way of great improvement for three million people can be expected. The task of regenerating Haiti calls for self-sacrificing genius—at present the élite hardly qualify either as self-denying servants of the public or as geniuses.

175 Haitian affairs during the 1930's were under the direction of
643 President Sténio Vincent, an able man to whose credit much can be
642 said. He devoted himself to his task with assiduity, talking face to
648 face with the peasants in Créole, urging them to assist in reforestation
241 and to use wisdom in crop rotation. He settled serious disputes with the neighboring Dominican Republic in amicable fashion. It was he who carried on the delicate and successful negotiations with President Roosevelt to give Haiti control of her own affairs once more. In coffee culture, assistance to trade, financial matters, and other economic details, he often proceeded expertly, particularly in view of the world depression which began as he assumed office. On the other hand, Vincent made the legislature his servant rather than a partner. He was a dictator (fortunately a benevolent one) who changed the constitution by highhanded methods in order to gain his own reëlection. His régime rested upon his alliance with the efficient Garde d'Haiti. There were few signs of democracy or of respect for civil liberties, as Americans understand those terms, in Vincent's eleven years.

175 The spectator has a feeling that he has seen all this before, when
643 for example Geffrard was elected to assure parliamentary government, only to become an effectively benevolent dictator as soon as the legislature opposed him. Geffrard was on the whole a good president, as Vincent was; but the former did not succeed in setting Haiti upon the path of economic and social security, and one hardly dared expect it of his modern counterpart.

175 In April, 1941, Élie Lescot, former Haitian Minister to the United
643 States, was elected as the thirtieth president of the republic. Vincent
had refused to call a plebiscite to approve an extension of his presi-
648 dential term for an additional five years, as he had done in 1935 near the end of the six-year term to which he was elected in 1930. Lescot had begun his presidency with many advantages, chiefly the friendly support of his predecessor, his acquaintance with United States officials, and a recent negotiated pact by which American aid will

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

be given to Haïti for vast rubber plantings.[21] Opposition to Lescot comes chiefly from those who consider him too friendly with the Dominicans who killed hundreds of Haitian workers in 1937, Lescot having figured prominently in negotiations that led to the Dominican government's agreement to pay indemnities to Haiti for the slaughter. 175 643 648

Reviewing the whole course of Haitian history, the field of politics seems to have marshaled itself behind a few regularities. In every case there have been voices raised to protest, yet the ruling clique, whatever its grouping, has effectively supported these characteristic political customs: 642 105

1. Complete dominance of political life by the president. Strong men seem to be necessary to rule ignorant masses. Even the revolutions precipitated by parties campaigning for parliamentarianism have, when successful, become governments by the president. This concentration of power in one man's hands makes the next revolution possible, for it is easier to overthrow one man than to eliminate a party based upon wide suffrage and diffused responsibility. 643 642

2. The inferior position of cabinet ministers. These have resembled neither European nor American secretaries of state in their responsibilities, but have been little more than clerks appointed by the president to serve as heads of a bureau. The treasurer-general, for example, during most of Haiti's history has merely received the moneys, while the president disbursed them. The secretary-general has neither originated nor conducted the details of public policy. Often as not, the minister has made a convenient whipping boy when the president has got himself involved in internal or foreign complications: by demanding the minister's resignation the president remained unscathed. 645 642

3. The unimportance of the legislature. It has made useful patron-

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[21] The European War, threatening the supply of rubber coming to the United States from British Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, has made the American government seek new sources. The Department of Agriculture established an experimental station and breeding gardens for rubber plants in Haiti, and the results were so successful that extensive areas were planted with rubber trees. Haiti and the United States in May, 1941, reached a long-term agreement for "the development of agriculture and economy"; the projects undertaken under the agreement include not only rubber but the further development of Haiti's banana plantations, the planting of oil crops, drug plants, spices, fiber plants, the stimulation of handicraft industries, and the development of forestry resources peculiar to the tropics. A further extension of an additional $500,000 in credits will be made for use on highways, irrigation projects, and to provide transportation facilities for the areas to be planted to rubber trees. 249 433 654 648 [312] [491]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

3. The unimportance of the legislature. It has made

useful patron

646 age for the president to dispense, and has preserved the semblance of
642 republican government; but hardly half a dozen legislative sessions
in all Haitian history have contributed seminal ideas in politics or initiated true reforms. How could they, indeed, when the president was consisently a dictator of policy?

666 4. The undemocratic nature of the vote. Senators are chosen by
the representatives, and the two groups together have generally
642 elected the president, when he did not come to power by revolution. The only chance people have had to vote has been for local officials and representatives. In these cases, the vote has been limited to the élite and the army, with the president's henchmen counting the ballots. Since the Occupation there have been plebiscites on constitutional changes, the people having the right to vote Yes or No.

692 5. The subservience of the courts to the president. They have been
filled with president's men, generally astute enough to consult presi-
643 dential wishes before handing down a decision. Foreign merchants
642 soon learned that they could expect little "justice" from the courts if their own cause conflicted with special Haitian interests. Foreign diplomats likewise learned that in crises the courts could involve the simplest issue in such verbal complexity that months of patience would be necessary to unwind the red tape.

641 6. The pliability of "constitutional rights." Freedom of speech and
661 of the press has been notably lacking, although scurrilous attacks on
the administration's enemies have often been permitted. Legislators
642 have been expelled. Graft has flourished. In 1833, for example, two representatives were expelled from the House "for systematically opposing the measures of the executive, and persisting in a demand for a statement of public expenditures." A century later a senator was expelled for almost the same reasons.

701 7. Militarism. Only in this respect is any real change apparent since
178 the American Occupation. The army was always large up to 1915,
and so constituted an economic drain as well as a political menace.
642 Generals had great power: they ruled each department and each
669 arrondissement, were subject only to the president, and were at the
bottom of every revolutionary movement.[22] Since the Occupation

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[22] In 1842, when the population was still less than a million, there were in the district governments 9 generals, 63 colonels, 48 lieutenant colonels, 9 captains, 1 lieutenant, and 28 medical officers; and in the standing army 33 colonels, 95 lieutenant colonels, 803 captains, 634 lieutenants, 577 sublieutenants and ensigns, 6,813 noncommissioned officers, and 25 medical officers. The army had 28,000 soldiers and cost about $600,000 a year. See John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, pp. 86 ff.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

numbers in the army have been radically reduced; yet in that very 701
fact there is the possibility for the only armed persons in Haiti, the 178
present Garde d'Haïti, to effect political coups But at least the budget 642
is not strained by the salaries of thousands of unnecessary soldiers, 669
as was true in pre-Occupation days.

8. The separation of the masses from government. By providing a 641
minimum of local government, but that fairly effective, the national
government has been able to keep the peasant out of all but revolu- 184
tionary politics. Rural communities have ordinarily got along well enough without formal government, so that the history of Haitian political thought and the analysis of Haitian political forms would treat of affairs interesting to only a fraction of the population.

It need hardly be repeated, after a reflection upon these apparent 642
permanencies of political life, that Haiti is not a democracy.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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XIII

CONSTITUTIONS AND POLITICAL FORMS

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QUITE aside from its castes and the political separation of 1807–20, Haiti has always consisted of two nations, one living in and near the towns and so within reach of established government, the other rural and yet capable of ordering its own affairs by folk rules without much actual governmental machinery. It is through the former that Haiti has a political history. Indeed, one is tempted to say that more than half the people have continually got along without any government whatever of a formal sort, for being peaceably inclined they have found custom and usage [669] sufficient for their needs. These people have been rarely disturbed by the state's rulers; revolutionary chieftains alone have found it worth their while to stir up the country folk to an active interest in politics.

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The formal subdivisions of Haiti have been, through most of its history, three: the *commune*, roughly corresponding to the American township; the *arrondissement*, a group of *communes*, just as the American county is a group of townships; and the *département*, comprising several *arrondissements*. All three terms were borrowed from France, although their significance was altered when applied to the Haitian scene.

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In the days of Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe, the government had owned vast plantations which were under the control of the military. Pétion and Boyer instituted the *commune* by combining numerous estates and farms into a group likewise to be controlled by soldiers. Until the American Occupation the police system of the country was military, with ordinary soldiers keeping order and making arrests when necessary. Since few people are less given to disorder than the Haitian peasants, the task of keeping order was not a serious one; indeed, soldiers were frequently stationed among their friends and relatives, who never thought of them as police. It some- [293] times happened, however, that soldiers were assigned to other parts of the country, where they swaggered about with their *cocomacaques* (heavy-jointed canes), using these or the flat of their swords to enforce their often arbitrary commands.

[illegible] In every commune recognized by the state was an important

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

In every commune recognized by the state was an important

official appointed by the president—the *juge de paix*. The term has 632 little relation to our "justice of the peace." It implies rather the 693 function performed by the old English country squire, who often by his prestige managed to patch up differences between neighbors without allowing matters to come to an issue, but who if the issue were joined sat as judge. The decision of the judge was final in all civil matters up to fifty dollars—and the case was rare in which peasants dealt in affairs as large as this. In the more populous communes (those containing large villages or towns) the juge de paix was more impersonal. He might render decisions, subject to appeal, in cases up to a hundred dollars. All minor police cases came within the province of this official, whose judgment was final in matters up to a twelve-dollar fine or a jail sentence of five days. All criminal cases began with this judge, but those of the gravest sort were speedily sent to higher courts.

By and large rural Haiti got along with a minimum of civil 369 government, and urban Haiti was governed much as a small provincial 64 town of the nineteenth century.

Several communes made an arrondissement, another political subdivision 631 with a distinct military cast. Through most of her history 701 Haiti had an average of about twenty of these arrondissements, each of them presided over by an army officer of high rank appointed by the president. In arrondissements containing important capitals a general, in lesser ones a brigadier-general, exercised both military and civil authority. This man was the medium through which the central government made known its decisions and laws. Because life could be tedious in a dull country town, in a district full of peaceful peasants, many of the generals spent their time in reflecting upon the chances of a successful insurrection which might make them important in national affairs. As already noted, the standard of discipline in the army was never very high, so that the presiding officer of an arrondissement might have a real sinecure if he was not ambitious.[1]

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[1] The military arrondissement always bore the name of the principal town or village within its borders. The following list shows the important places during the time of Boyer: (631) (701) (103)

In the department of the North there were five arrondissements: Cap-Haïtien, Grande-Rivière, Marmelade, Fort Liberté, Limbé.
In the Northwest, three: Port-de-Paix, Cap Nicolas Môle, Le Borgne.
In the Artibonite, three: Saint-Marc, Gonaïves, Mirebalais.
In the West, three: Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, Léogane.
In the South, five: Les Cayes, Jérémie, Aquin, Tiburon, Nippes.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

631 [341] Overlapping these military arrondissements have been financial arrondissements, generally six in number. The capital of each of these was a port, with a customs house: Port-au-Prince and Jacmel in the West, Les Cayes and Jérémie in the South, Cap-Haïtien in the North, and Gonaïves in the Artibonite.

Finally there were the five *départements*. These seem never to have been much more than geographical divisions to which it was convenient occasionally to refer. In more recent years, as records have been kept with more accuracy, the departments have developed important clerical significance.

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Département	*Capital*	*Estimated Population* (1950)
North	Cap-Haïtien	450,000
Northwest	Port-de-Paix	150,000
Artibonite	Gonaïves	475,000
West	Port-au-Prince	950,000
South	Les Cayes	630,000

According to the present constitution, the country still has its five administrative departments, but has increased its other political subdivisions. There are 37 arrondissements to attend to governmental details, and in addition, 10 prefectures overlapping the arrondissements and serving as units of police control. The arrondissements are still further subdivided into 94 communes, 43 military posts, and 551 rural sections. Each commune is administered by a communal magistrate, appointed by the secretary of the interior, and so subordinate to the central government. This magistrate is assisted by a communal council or a municipal council, composed of elected prominent citizens.[a]

692 693 Courts have existed only in the important towns, which since Boyer's presidency have varied in number from four to eight. Each of these courts has consisted of a president or *doyen*, four judges, four substitute judges, a commissioner appointed by the president of the republic to keep watch over the proceedings of the body, and various inferior clerks and secretaries. Judges are politically appointed, either by the president of the republic or by his cabinet. Civil cases which exceed fifty dollars in extent have been handled by these 693 695 courts, as also all appeals from decisions of local juges de paix. To the judges were added in 1826 juries to assist in criminal cases

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[a] See Lot Demarville, Géographie-Atlas (Port-au-Prince, 1943), passim.

exceeding the jurisdiction of the local juges, these juries to be named 693 by the doyen and his colleagues. It was a dubious reform, often a 695 worthless privilege; at times it was definitely harmful, for no matter how explicit the law, mere technicalities in a long, involved trial could be completely befuddling to an illiterate juror. Brown tells the tale of a certain foreman of the jury who asked a juror his opinion of a defendant's innocence; the juror replied that he could not write, whereas "you have written it all down. Let us know what you have done."[5] Innocence might easily be convicted by this system, and guilt escape. The addition of a jury to the court was even useless in many instances, for the language of the lawyers was French, and that of the jurors almost certain to be Créole. Boyer's attempt to graft English court practice upon the French system already functioning in Haiti was certainly not happy; the jury system shortly disappeared.

Complicated forms are not for the peasant. He knew a soldier and 641 a soldier's function in the countryside, but not the relation of the arrondissement to the national government; the juge de paix was understandable, but not the procedure of the civil courts at department capitals. The national government and its structure were remote, although the president's name might be familiar. Haiti was really organized from the top down rather than from the bottom up. The powers of the early presidents were arbitrary: they could not only order changes in the framework of any part of government, but might also shift at will the personnel.

Carl Becker remarks: "In 1791, the French began their spectacular 114 feat in constitution making. Between 1791 and 1875 Taine counts 175 thirteen French constitutions adopted in relatively rapid succession. 647 I can find only twelve, but maybe Taine is right. It doesn't really 171 matter. The point is that for facility, speed, and endurance in constitution making, France holds the record. Yet other nations also ran."[6] Haiti was one of them: in fact the record is properly hers, although Professor Becker does not mention the little Caribbean state. In the nineteenth century Haiti lived under fifteen constitutions, to which she has added at least two more in the twentieth century. It is not always easy to say when a constitution is new: its author may

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[5] Jonathan Brown, *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo*, II, 271-272.

[6] "Afterthoughts on Constitutions," *The Yale Review*, XXVII, No. 3 (Spring, 1938), 452.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

114 consider it novel when it changes little but detail; and some of Haiti's
175 seventeen documents were too short-lived to be significant. Haiti
642 shows her Frenchness in this constitution making, this love of being
171 logical and having the details all written down in proper order.

To try to analyze the content of so many documents would be a
175 work of supererogation.[5] A brief comment upon each, however, will
improve one's acquaintance with the mind of Haitian statesmen.

175 1801. Toussaint L'Ouverture's constitution, laying the framework
of his venture as director of the colony while still acknowledging its
642 relationship to France. In it he announced himself governor-general
466 for life with the right to name his successor, thereby becoming the
forerunner of the strong-man principle in politics. The most important
part of this constitution was its detailed organization of the
forced-labor system.

175 1805. Dessalines' constitution establishing the empire. In many
respects it did not differ from Toussaint's previous document, for the
642 same military organization was preserved, and the same system of
563 forced labor; otherwise, there was little structure of government.
One article was included which was to appear in every other constitution
of Haiti up to 1918: "No white man shall set foot on this
territory as master or as landowner."[6] In other respects there were
sagacious provisions which did not endure. For example, the generic
name of "blacks" was adopted for all Haitians, of whatever color.
175 The Emperor was trying thus to forestall the dissensions which
642 inevitably must result from the growth of social classes based on skin
[463] color. Another important provision was that every citizen who was
not an ordinary cultivator must learn and practice some mechanical
art. This was not merely a thrust at the aristocratic pretensions of the
old affranchis, but also an endeavor to make Haiti industrious and
self-sufficient. Except in the North, where Dessalines' deputy Christophe
kept the requirement, the article was honored only in the
breach. The social situation was touched at one other point: "No
one is worthy of being a Haitian who is not a good father, a good
[429] son, a good husband, and a good soldier." Parents were forbidden to
disinherit their children. Although, as has been shown, the Emperor

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[5] Such an analysis was made by Louis-Joseph Janvier, *Les Constitutions d'Haïti, 1801–85* (Paris, 1886).

[6] He had made this declaration first on April 28, 1804; at that time the words "No white man" read "No colonist nor European."

175 642 put little stress upon strictly legal marriage, he did try to foster family ties and to strengthen family life.

1806. Pétion's first constitution, drawn up with his fellow mulattoes. [643] Taking his model from the United States constitution, he established a republic with a president and a legislature, although the president of Haiti had greater relative powers than the president of the United States. He might be reëlected, but was not to be a dictator.

1807. Christophe's reply to the mulattoes, establishing the "state" of Haiti which should (he hoped) overwhelm the "republic" of Haiti. His political and social systems were in few respects different from those of Toussaint and Dessalines.

1811. Christophe's second constitution, establishing his kingdom and creating a nobility, but otherwise maintaining the forced-labor system.

1816. Pétion's second constitution, the longest-lived in Haitian history. Having been several times reëlected president he now adopted the principle of a life presidency, with the right of the incumbent to name his successor. The legislature and forms of a representative republic were retained.

1843. The completely unrealistic constitution of the young revolutionaries who succeeded in overthrowing Boyer. The fight of the anti-Boyeristes had been for effective parliamentary government; to that end they provided for the direct election of the president by the people, a democratic vote, the exercise of legislative power by the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate, and the subordination of military to civil authority. Such democracy was too radical for either élite or army to endure, and this constitution was shortly superseded.

1846. Riché's return (in most respects) to the constitution of 1816. He kept the principle that the president should be elected, not appointed for life by his predecessor; but the election was by the combined Senate and Chamber, rather than by democratic vote of the people.

1849. Soulouque's constitution, founding his personal and gaudy Second Empire.

1859. Geffrard's return to the Pétion constitution of 1816, as revised by Riché in 1846, with a few details added to meet changes in social conditions in the last decade.

1867. Salnave's modifications of the constitution of 1859. The parliamentarians were in control once more, and inserted the require-

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 ment that two thirds of the members of either Chamber must be 642 present before a law could be voted—a stipulation making it possible [646] for any clique to hold up legislation by absenting itself.

1874. The constitution of Domingue who, having defeated the [643] Liberals, promulgated a constitution "profoundly modifying" the language of the 1867 document. It legally concentrated power in the hands of the president—where, indeed, it had always been in spite of constitutional declarations.

1879. Salomon's first constitution, which professed to be a reexamination of Haitian institutions, but was actually not different in essentials from the document of 1846. The line from Pétion to Riché to Salomon and his successors was the main one from which deviations, such as those of Soulouque, occurred.

1886. Salomon's second constitution, a mild revision of his first.

1889. Hyppolite, the new president, felt it necessary to have a new (178) constitution, although like the constitution of 1886 this was little more than a revision of that of 1879. Under the 1889 document Haiti continued to function, more and more haltingly, up to the time of the American Occupation.

[648] 1918. The constitution drawn up in Washington[7] and forced through in Haiti by a farcical plebiscite. Its most debated provision [423] was the elimination of the prohibition against ownership of land by foreign whites, thus ending the one common point in all previous constitutions since 1805. For the rest, it changed little of the actual [641] structure of Haitian government, but provided a great number of unaccustomed democratic rights: freedom of assembly, trial by jury in political cases, direct election of senators, submission of amendments to popular vote, freedom of the press.

[641] 1927. Although this is considered merely a revision of the 1918 constitution, its changes were actually more noteworthy than many expected by the so-called new constitutions. Thirteen amendments were carried by popular vote, again so overwhelming as to be ridiculous, restricting many of the democratic liberties granted in 1918 which had proved embarrassing both to President Borno and

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[7] Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his campaign for the vice-presidency of the United States in 1920, claimed that he had written most of this constitution while he was Woodrow Wilson's assistant-secretary of the navy. (See the *New York Times*, August 19, 1920.) The constitution was approved in Haiti by a vote of 69,337 to 335.

to the Americans who ruled Haiti through his office. This constitution once more increased the power of the president. 642 [641]

1932. Vincent's constitution, professing to be quite different from the two in effect during the Occupation, but actually closely resembling the 1927 revision with its concentration of power in executive hands. In 1935 an important amendment was added, making it possible for the president to be reëlected. [643]

Despite this welter of constitutions, the essential framework of Haitian government has consisted, except for brief interruptions, of a president, a legislature, and courts. The term of the presidency has varied from four to seven years (in the early days, for life) with the privilege of reëlection being now forbidden, now granted. Two presidents who tried to extend their terms, Salnave and Salomon, were deposed by revolutions for their temerity. Their distinction of being among the few to serve out the allotted term was thus marred by an ignominious end. 642 643

Regularly the president was obligated to "maintain internal peace" —a requirement few heads of state have been able to carry out, since internal peace has been most elusive. To aid him in his task he has been given wide powers: he commands the army (always large until 1915; every president except one between 1804 and 1915 was a general) and the navy (never more than a few ill-conditioned vessels, but these important in the general roadless condition of the country); most constitutions also gave him the right to issue necessary proclamations in order to deal with special crises. He "watches over" tribunals by means of appointed commissioners; by this arrangement he may obviously exert pressure for favorable judgments in cases which interest him. 643 [701] [706] [716] [792]

The one body which might conceivably check the president, namely, the legislature, has generally been composed of the president's men, for the Senate has usually been elected by the lower house from a list of candidates proposed by the president, while the representatives would hardly dare defy the man who controlled the army (which presided over such elections) and could dissolve the legislature. By most of the constitutions the president proposed to the legislature all laws except those concerning taxation; even here, since he directed the receipt and issue of public moneys, he was not really limited. Over foreign affairs the executive had effective control by 643 [644] [646]

643 reason of his power to name agents accredited to foreign govern-
ments; with the approval of the Senate he made treaties and wars. In
cases of malversation, or gross corruption, the president might be
denounced by the Senate (his own nominees), and the High Court of
Justice (his own appointees) would sit in judgement on him; matters
[669] have never reached this pass, however, for the Haitian method of
checking a president's "malversation" has been the more direct one
of revolution.

643 At a salary generally set in the neighborhood of thirty or forty
thousand dollars the president could live luxuriously, the highest-
[465] paid person in Haiti. The salary combined with the prestige and
[661] perquisites of office was enough to explain the eagerness with which
men sought the position. "Perquisites" often enough included graft.

645 Details of administration have been in the hands of various departments of state, their number depending upon the constitution then in force. As has been said, the president generally regarded his cabinet members as little more than clerks to attend to details. Only a few in the whole nineteenth century stand out prominently as directors of policy—Boyer as Pétion's secretary-general; Inginac, holding the same position under Boyer; Anténor Firmin, Hyppolite's foreign secretary; and a handful of others. During the four years, 1843–47, of "ephemeral governments" the cabinet ministers sometimes managed to rule their offices, and under the succession of ignorant Negro generals at the end of the century, if the educated élite secretaries had not taken charge of affairs no one would have handled them. Constitutional language made the cabinet officers seem more important than they were, however, for the actual position of a minister was usually that of head clerk, chief errand boy and handy man for the president, and convenient scapegoat when crises arose in foreign affairs, finances, public works, or other spheres.

646 The legislative body has ordinarily consisted of two chambers, the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. Senators must be thirty years old. They have ordinarily served a nine-year term, being available for reëlection only after three years out of office. The method of choice curbed their power: the lower house selected each senator from a list of three nominated by the president for each vacancy. For a salary of sixteen hundred dollars and freedom from arrest in civil cases, all the senator had to do was to correspond with the president and lower house on public affairs, and decree appro-

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

priations of supplies to the branches of government; the Senate did not initiate legislation. In so far as the Senate checked the president, 646 this check consisted in the body's being in permanent session. A vacation might be voted, but even during this period a resident committee was in the capital, so that attention to presidential actions might always be called by a senator's speeches; and the Senate could reconvene suddenly at will.

The Chamber of Representatives, composed of men of twenty-five [666] and over, was chosen every five years by the "electoral colleges" of the communes—men elected by the leading citizens of the commune. No law is effective "whose draft has not been proposed by the executive, discussed and adopted by the representatives, and decreed by the Senate." It might seem that the phrase, "discussed and adopted by the representatives," would give much power to a Chamber in office for five years; actually the Chamber has rarely proved obstinate, and for good reason. At the expiration of the term of the legislators, the president convokes the communal assemblies to choose new deputies or to reëlect old ones; the army "keeps order" [701] at the election, the Electoral College is hand-picked, and so the president's men have generally been chosen. Their pay has been two hundred dollars a month during the sitting, and a dollar a league for traveling expenses.

Pétion's constitution of 1816 evolved a masterpiece of deceptive 641 generosity in stating that there should be "universal suffrage—except for women, criminals, idiots, and menials—by ballot." Although the group of criminals and idiots might be small, women were more than half the population, and "menials" was interpreted to mean not only house servants but also peasants; in other words, there was "universal suffrage" of about three per cent of the population at the outside. The élite and the army were the only potential voters. Since [666] the elections were held under the watchful eye of the soldiers, and the ballots counted by presidential appointees, there was often extraordinary unity of public opinion.

The judicial branch of the national government, as distinct from 692 the juge de paix of the commune and the courts in the important towns, existed in part only on paper. There was generally a provision in the constitution, for example, for a High Court of Justice, which should have jurisdiction in all charges preferred by the legislative bodies against their own members, against the president of the re-

692 public, or against any of the secretaries of state or other important officials; but if this court was ever convoked, records of its actions are lacking.[8]

The most important actually functioning court was that of Cassation. In American terminology this would be called the Court of Appeals, reviewing cases coming up from the civil and criminal courts of the important towns. It sat at Port-au-Prince, and consisted of fourteen judges appointed by the president and his cabinet.

[177] Boyer had borrowed most of the forms of important Haitian courts from France, but he could not transfer to his country the spirit and tradition which made those courts function in France. The High Court of Justice remained a mere plan; the national Court of Cassation and the so-called department courts in the four to eight large towns operated under close presidential scrutiny; only the juges de paix, dealing with small and homely cases, had comparative freedom.

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It was generally acknowledged throughout the nineteenth century that Haitian judges, whether of the Court of Cassation or of the department courts, could be influenced by pecuniary and political considerations. The odds were heavy in favor of any suitor who was
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liberal in his bribes to the judges; "justice" could be bought, and was. By French tradition of justice, the prisoner was assumed to be guilty until he was proved innocent. In Haiti he was bullied, cajoled, and cross-questioned in order to force a confession, and to make him state in open court what he was said to have admitted in his preliminary examination. Confessions were obtained by beatings, and prisoners were occasionally even tortured to death.

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Another characteristic of the nineteenth-century courts—and not in Haiti alone—was the tardiness of their procedure. Consider the civil case in one of the department courts. If a creditor instituted a suit against a debtor in one department and obtained a favorable verdict, the defendant was permitted to appeal from the sentence to the court of an adjoining department, and so on in succession throughout the whole series; if the last court confirmed the judgment of the first, the defendant could then move it into the Court of

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[692] [8] This Supreme Court would, according to the constitution, be formed only by proclamation of the Senate (and therefore under the ultimate control of the president), and might not hold its sessions in a spot more than twelve leagues from the seat of the Senate. Consisting of fifteen judges to be chosen by lot from the tribunals of the five Haitian departments, a two-thirds majority would be necessary for conviction, and no appeal might be made from its decisions.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Cassation at Port-au-Prince. In the event that this court confirmed 175
the judgment of the lower courts, the defendant might still appeal 695
from it to the president, and might apply for a new trial in the lower courts. Thus the contest would proceed ad infinitum, however clear the proof that the debt was just.

The Court of Cassation exceeded all others in the slowness of its judgments. Its judges were under the surveillance of the president, and must consult with him before deciding a case. If he disagreed, and the state was a party to the case, the judges must reconsider "to see if they have not taken a wrong view of the question at issue." Even so, the grand judge might stay execution as long as he deemed advisable after a judgment was confirmed.

Judges were rarely chosen from among trained lawyers, but were 692
appointed by the government because of political considerations.
Consequently, few people had any faith in court decisions, and in 695
general they avoided taking their problems to law. The peasants in 641
particular were bewildered by the whole procedure. White foreigners also often complained that unless they were willing to pay heavily they had no slightest chance of getting justice in the Haitian courts.

It must be emphasized that the majority of cases coming before 691
the courts were civil rather than criminal, for it has been a universal matter of comment that the Haitian people were rarely guilty of serious crimes. Minor thefts of poultry or animals have been the commonest breaches of the peace, while murder, arson, and rape
have almost never occurred. Even the bitterest critics of the republic 674
have noted the absence of crime.[9] It is noteworthy that, despite their poverty and the hardness of their life, the Haitians are, contrary to the prevailing white man's notion of Negro unreliability, passion, and lawlessness, a tranquil folk. The absence of crime speaks volumes for the wholesomeness of a people much maligned by the stories of their "Voodoo" practices and bloody revolutions. An élite ex-president spoke to me with pride of the honesty of the country people who welcomed travelers with true hospitality and with no expectation of payment. "You might sleep safely in a country cabin with a thousand dollars on your person," he said.[10]

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[9] Mackenzie, British consul during a part of Boyer's régime, and young Haiti's severest critic, said that during his whole stay he knew of only one murder, and that in this case the assassin was executed. [114] [682]

[10] In times of revolution, brigandage was expected but was not accounted a crime, any more than killing in warfare is called murder. [669] [683]

674 369 696 697 Soldiers, then, had no great difficulty policing town and countryside, for there was little more crime in the towns than in rural regions. A person arrested would be haled before the nearest juge de paix who would, if necessary, sentence him to jail—which meant sending him to one of the larger towns. This was rather a severe penalty, for the jails were filthy; moreover, only about ten cents a week was ordinarily allotted to each prisoner for food with the result that if a prisoner's family did not supply him, he was likely to be near starvation. Extra work was required for extra fare. Haiti was probably no worse off in respect to its jails than most European and American countries at the time, for this was before the era of prison reform. Inmates of jails were likely to be only petty thieves.

647 During certain régimes the presidents or their generals managed to have numbers of convicts sentenced to hard work, in order to have forced labor on their private estates or projects dear to them. Under any administration there were likely to be a few convicts who performed repair work on streets and roads. It was the usual practice to chain or rope them together by pairs, three yards apart; accompanied by soldiers with loaded muskets, the convicts labored from daylight to sunset, with an hour and a half for a meal at noon. The government pretended to provide for them, but in order to save expense two of the criminals accompanied by two soldiers with fixed bayonets were sent about the neighborhood to beg for the group. The result was that the wretches went ill fed and half naked. They slept in jail on beds which were little more than boards.

701 175 The final and most persistent branch of government has been the army.[11] Owing to the overmilitarization of Haiti, generals were perennially participating in the civil government—or engaged in overthrowing it. It was to be expected that following the revolution the new independent state formed in 1804 should have a military cast. Dessalines, Christophe, Pétion, Geffrard, Boyer, Cangé, Yayou, Magloire Ambroise, Férou, François, Capoix, Rigaud—these were the great generals and the only important statesmen. It was as if in America not only Washington had been a military leader, but also Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Jay, Hamilton, Madison, Pinckney,

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[647] [11] In most governments there has been a body which, although connected with the legislature, had functions pertaining to the law. This was the Chamber of Accounts, a body of five men who examined into and reported to the president upon every branch of expenditure and collection of revenues. It might recommend to him certain financial reforms or improvements, but had no power to enforce its suggestions.

Patrick Henry, Randolph, and Samuel Adams as well. Madiou esti- 175
mates that there were 52,500 men in the army in 1804, when Haiti's 701
population was less than 400,000.[12]

Fear of the return of the French kept the army large, and the 175
administration of agricultural affairs under both Dessalines and 712
Christophe was in charge of it. The construction of a fortress in every 466
district put laborers under the direct influence of the military.[13] In [705]
addition to the corvée, or forced labor, required to construct these
fortifications, the workers of the nation in the time of Dessalines also
had to clear the hillsides and the ravines connecting valleys, and
plant them with bananas, yams, plantains, and other provisions to
supply the garrisons which manned the forts.

The Emperor left his army to feed and clothe itself. Occasional 175
rations were given as a part of wages, but they were irregularly 705
distributed. In the South particularly the troops began to murmur 701
and desert, stirred up by their mulatto officers who were themselves
no better rewarded, and who were already beginning their plot to
overthrow the Emperor. The accusation was made that the money
which should have gone to the army was being used on Dessalines'
mistresses. The soldiers indulged themselves in that most damaging
of Haitian weapons, the witty song, full of double meanings but
deadly in its thrust at public personages; by these symbolic songs the
fall of Dessalines was not only predicted but actually prepared. 175

Christophe kept a military state, but he had learned many lessons 643
from watching affairs under Dessalines. Realizing that he could not 701
trust the preservation of his régime to the fickleness of an army which 625
had seen his rise to power and had already deserted its first commander in chief, knowing too that there was treason even among his own guards, he made a contract with a company of foreign merchants for the transportation of twenty thousand blacks from Africa. These were to make up a military force independent of the Haitians,

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[12] *Histoire d'Haïti*, III, 122.

[13] Each general was commanded by Dessalines to build a fort on one of the moun- [712]
tains in his district. The design seems to have been left to the general. A few of the fortifications were truly impressive. Christophe built La Ferrière near Milot in the North; Pétion the fortress of Jean-Jacques at Grand Fond, four leagues from Port-au-Prince; Capoix called his Les Trois Pavillons, in the range of mountains back of Port-de-Paix; Cangé and Yayou together built Campan near Léogane; Magloire Ambroise constructed a fortress near Cap Rouge and called it by that name; Geffrard built Platon near Les Cayes; Férou built Mafranc near Jérémie; François began but did not finish Le Bonnet Carré near Aquin.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

643 and being the personal property of the monarch and recipients of his
701 royal favor, were to constitute the perpetual support of his throne.
625 Only four thousand of these compulsory immigrants came, but
625 Christophe made them into very effective companies of police,
whom he named the Royal Dahomets from the country of their
origin. They performed the duties of a gendarmerie in all the districts
of the North, drove the cultivators to their labors, watched over
property and the security of the proprietors, and maintained industry
and a strict subordination among all ranks of people in the kingdom.

175 Christophe's regular troops were well clothed and armed. They
701 were kept under stern discipline, no mercy or relaxation being
[703] shown them; delinquency on their part brought flagellation or a
military execution. The troops received only a nominal stipend, and
each soldier was required to gain his subsistence by cultivating a few
acres of ground allotted to him out of the national domain. The
usual quarter of this income had, of course, to be turned over as a tax
to the state. Although the King's power was maintained by soldiers,
he never coddled them. "The soldiers of the army as well as the
laborers of the plantations lived in perpetual dread of the rod of
authority," wrote Brown.[14] They seem to have developed a tradition
of some special fetish power possessed by Christophe, a sort of *mana*,
to use anthropological terminology. Even princes and dukes were
chastised by the King's orders, and then made to do menial work by
way of further punishment.

Conditions in the republic of Pétion were similar and yet different
—similar in that soldiers formed the support of the government,
different in that Pétion did not rule by fear. Every individual man
between 16 and 60, a few cultivators excepted, was required by law
to be a soldier, either in the *corps solde* (regular troops of the line),
or in the *corps non solde* (national guard). The former, both under
Pétion and in the early days of Boyer, had about 40,000 men distributed
in strong detachments in towns and communes all over the
[914] country. Their costume, instead of being neat, uniform, and daily
inspected as with Christophe's army, was ragged and mismated; they
managed according to popular parlance "to find linen on every
[465] hedge." They were paid from fifty cents to a dollar a month, according
[541] to the existing solvency or exigency of the state. Each week
[512] end a parade and review was held, and then a small fatigue party
was taken to do actual duty, the others being dismissed until the next

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[14] *Op. cit.*, II, 209.

175 701 [512] Saturday to use their time cultivating the soil, pursuing some mechanical craft, or acting as day laborers.

692 703 175 It must be once more emphasized that the civil was everywhere subservient to the military power. The administration of justice in tribunals was carried out only at the pleasure of the army chiefs. No person would have dared bring suit against a high officer; the only efficacious way of obtaining justice against petty offenders was through summary decision and corporal chastisement by the commanding officer.

701 625 175 By the close of Boyer's rule, during which he had kept the army up to its full numbers while pursuing a policy of economy, the outward appearance of the troops was almost ludicrous. They appeared at review wearing generally what pleased them or what they could scrape together, for they had to supply their own clothing and arms. The only effectual employment of the soldiery was as armed police, for Haiti never had to fight external powers. The soldiers drummed and fifed, mustered on parade and went through the formations, but otherwise merely stood (or sat) sentry at the doors of public offices, hunted up at the command of the magistrates *les mauvais sujets*, guarded prisons and prisoners on chain-gang duty, loitered at barriers, collected tolls, and examined permits.

175 701 [641] [703] A large army, practically idle, could easily be seduced into the support of revolutionary movements. Principles of discipline and loyalty current in European armies of the day were nonexistent in nineteenth-century Haiti. The numbers in the army varied from twenty to forty or fifty thousand. A strange estimate was made for the year 1867: 6,500 general officers and staff; 7,000 regimental officers; and only 6,500 soldiers.[15] It was said that "*tout Haïtien qui n'était pas général de division était au moins soldat.*" The higher grades became rewards for political service; the lower ranks had to be filled up by recruiting parties—when these were abroad, all men who did not desire a period of enforced leisure away from home remained in hiding.

While the army was not alone responsible for the tragedies of insurrection and mismanagement which consistently befell the country, it was never uninvolved in these misfortunes. Only the [648] radical reforms undertaken by the American Occupation saved modern Haiti from continued military domination.

[15] Sir Spenser St. John, *Hayti, or the Black Republic*, p. 310.

[p. 250]

XIV

COMMERCE

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THIS book is no more fundamentally concerned with the detailed economic history of Haiti than with its intimate political events; our attention is bent here, as elsewhere, on the broad functioning of social institutions. Peasant agricultural life has already been depicted: the products of the peasant's labor, when marketed, have brought whatever prosperity the state and its ruling caste have enjoyed. These marketed products have consisted chiefly of coffee, with a very little sugar and cotton. The present section concerns Haiti's economic relations with the outside world.

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It was the commerce of the colony of Saint-Domingue which made that small division of the Antillean island so valuable to its mother country. Exports in the last year before the revolution are estimated at fifty million dollars (461 million livres) in terms of modern money.[1] Although commerce was seriously interrupted by the troubled state of affairs in the 1790's, the upswing of prosperity under Toussaint indicated that the country had still highly profitable enterprises. Merchants in the young United States were particularly intent upon the benefits to be derived from trade in molasses. All foreign trade was violently interrupted once more in 1802-3, when the revolution was in progress; but the interest of larger nations in what would issue from the Haitian declaration of independence in 1804 was out of all apparent proportion to the size of the tiny country. Their interest was partially in the question of whether ex-slaves could rule themselves politically; even more they were interested in the economic future of Haiti.

Three divergent economic policies were pursued by the early rulers, three variations among which future presidents might choose the one in their opinion most profitable. That of Dessalines was progressively to isolate Haiti, tolerating foreign trade only so long as it seemed necessary to establish the country's self-sufficiency. Christophe's, on the other hand, was the traditional monarch's

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[1] H. P. Davis, *Black Democracy* (2d ed., New York, 1929), p. 25; Anténor Firmin, *M. Roosevelt, président des États-Unis, et la république d'Haïti* (New York, 1905), pp. 435-436.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

policy of encouraging trade with his friends and prohibiting it with 175
his enemies—both arbitrarily. The variation of Pétion was a sort of 439
mercantilism, with set high tariffs.

What Dessalines planned was in terms of Western statecraft so 175
weird that white onlookers felt they were restrained in calling Dessa- 177
lines a transplanted African tribal chieftain. So passionately intense 643
was the fury of that general against all whites that he took every 655
precaution he could devise to prevent face-to-face dealings between 466
his Haitians and foreigners. By deceit, treachery, and ingenious 439
cruelty he conducted a massacre which deserves comparison with
that of Saint Bartholomew: this effectively rid the country of white
residents. Since for a time Haiti would have to depend for economic [166]
survival upon trade with foreigners, Dessalines next conceived a [24]
project whereby the whole population would be gathered in the centre of the island, in the most protected valleys and the gorges of the highest mountains. In these fastnesses the people would never see a white but would work on the land, producing sugar and coffee and cotton for export without ever leaving their local habitations. On the seacoast would be established certain "counters" over which a few incorruptible Haitians, chosen by the Emperor himself, would
sell local products and buy the necessary imported goods. Impreg- [712]
nable fortresses were to guard access to the interior,[2] which would
be reached by new roads from the seacoast "counters." Every seaport [49]
was to be destroyed as soon as new towns could be built in the back [509]
country. Already when his death intervened Dessalines had moved [361]
his capital from the Cape (that is, Cap-Haïtien, formerly Cap Français) to the inland village of Marchand (in the department of the Artibonite; now renamed Dessalines), and his next plan was to transfer Port-au-Prince eight leagues inland to the plantation Dérance, among the mountains.

Dessalines has been thought absurd, childish, barbaric. But there is something poignant, even tragic, in this fiery determination of the black chieftain, bitter over the cruelties and indignity to which his people had been subject for decades, to use this alien island as best he could and preserve his people at any cost from such another domination.

Despite his scheme for ultimate isolation of the people, Dessalines 175
kept everyone steadily at work by the forced-labor system instituted 466

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[2] See p. 247 and note 13. under Toussaint.

3; Leyburn 2-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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437 under Toussaint. The ravages of warfare were partially repaired, so that commerce once again appeared at the seaports. English, American, Danish, Swedish, and German vessels now shared what once the French had monopolized. Toussaint's export duties of ten per cent on sugar, coffee, cotton, and cacao were kept by Dessalines, and import duties likewise remained just about the same as formerly: twelve per cent.

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427 A strange stopgap trading scheme was devised. Dessalines named the specific ports at which foreign ships might enter, then established a number of Haitian "consignees" at each of these ports. Numbers were given to each of these men. The first ship which entered the harbor was consigned to the shop of the trader having Number 1, the second to Number 2, and so on until each consignee had dealt with a foreigner, when Number 1 would receive the right to a second ship's cargo.[3] The captain of a vessel sent to Haiti did not know until his arrival in port who would be his consignee. If the probity of the Haitian merchant to whom fate assigned the captain did not inspire confidence, he was not obliged to sell goods to him—but was prohibited from selling them thereafter anywhere else in the country.

In this system there was room for every sort of irregularity and graft. More often than not Dessalines gave the assignments to his favorites, this to a military leader, that to an administrative officer, the other to some simple citizen whom he wished to reward. Often two ships would appear on the horizon at the same time: a consignee would then rush to the officer of the port and promise him half or a quarter of his commission if he would assign the more important of the vessels to his own number; the officer would then order the richer vessel in first.

Violent discontent arose over this system, which meant great profit to the beneficiaries of the monopoly and nothing to those excluded from it. As usual under a rigid system, means were found to evade the monopoly. Foreign ship captains found it well worth their while to sell clandestinely to individuals not high in the favor of the Emperor. This smuggling increased, the captains being both ingenious and adaptable to the needs of their dealers; sometimes the trade was wholesale, sometimes retail. Naturally enough, the Emperor imposed heavy fines on the smuggling operations when detected, but the illicit trade did not cease. [687]

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[3] This mode of consignment was sanctioned by a decree of Dessalines on September 6, 1805.

175 Haiti under Dessalines seemed to be flourishing, although it was
433 less productive than under the French colonial régime. This was partly because the material damage of the wars had been too great to be quickly repaired; partly it was because many of the free Haitians had discovered ways of disappearing into the remote valleys, there to live the life of independent squatters, safe from the blows of Dessalines' overseers. Tables of exports showed that sugar production was rapidly declining, and that coffee was now becoming the principal crop of the country.[4] Many cane fields, indeed, were turning into rugged thickets, their mills and refineries falling to ruins beside the clogged irrigation ditches.

175 It was a bewildering "system," then, this instituted by Dessalines:
466 intense activity of serfs on government plantations, but an increasing
439 number of deserting squatters; foreign trade encouraged, yet run by
579 principles of local favoritism. Even the old-fashioned practice of piracy was reëstablished, for the Emperor gave letters of marque to some of his subjects who owned ships, allowing them to pursue French and Spanish vessels as the rightful prey of an enemy country. Sometimes these Haitian corsairs even disturbed smaller English merchant ships. Finally, it was Dessalines who said to his favorites, "*Plumez la poule* [that is, the Haitian people], *mais prenez garde qu'elle ne crie pas.*"

175 Christophe, upon his accession to power in the North, completely
439 abandoned the fantastic schemes of Dessalines for putting an end to
437 all contact between Haitians and foreigners. Among his earliest acts were efforts to undo the economic measures of the Emperor. In his first address he proclaimed certain free ports, announcing that the flags of all nations would be respected and property protected.[5] Next he abolished the consignment system of trading, allowing all foreign traders free access to Haitian merchants. This open system did away with the need of smuggling.

175 Because Christophe was almost pathetically anxious to make a
439 good impression upon Great Britain, he was scrupulous in living up
648 to his promises of security of property and justice in commercial dealings—to British merchants. The United States fared ill at the King's hands, for it was a young republic which had by refusing

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[4] See note on this chapter, p. 320, section 4.

[5] His constitution of 1807 likewise makes this promise: "The government solemnly guarantees to foreign merchants the security of their persons and property."

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

175 recognition to the kingdom, specifically failed to pay him proper
439 respect. Moreover he seized the property of American merchants in
648 his kingdom to make good a sum of 223,955.19 he could not recover from a Baltimore firm.[6] Agriculture flourished in the North, but the English were not yet certain whether Haitian credit could be trusted. The demand of the traders for cash was allowed, and so with almost no risk British dealers supplied the steady demand for staple trade goods,[7] taking in return either coffee and sugar or the equivalent in cash.

175 Christophe was chary of publishing any specific figures on the
439 economic life of his kingdom: we have no way, therefore, of estimating either the annual production or the annual income. One of his statesmen, Baron de Vastey, affirmed that in 1817 more than 150 ships were supplied with cargoes of coffee and sugar at the Cape alone.[8] This number is equal to that which sailed from the port during its most peaceful and prosperous periods in colonial times; one suspects the baron of exaggerating. We know, however, that Christophe was the chief merchant in his kingdom, setting his own prices and disposing of his own goods before others could sell; we know, too, that he left a large fortune in his coffers when he died.

175 Like Dessalines, King Henry Christophe had his pirates, and re-
579 doubtable ones. But he warned them to prey only on French ships
439 bound for ports in Pétion's republic in the South; he did not wish his trade interfered with in the North.

The policies of Dessalines and Christophe were personal, based upon their subjective prejudices and preferences; those of Pétion were more in accord with the practice of other civilized nations of the time. They had to be, perforce, in view of the economic and political position of his republic.

175 Southern Haiti had never, even in colonial times, been so intensely
439 cultivated as the North. Foreign traders were accustomed to deal at
648 the Cape, now the capital of Christophe's dominion, while Port-au-Prince was but a secondary market. After the civil war Christophe had practically allied himself with Great Britain. If this coup were to be counterbalanced, Pétion would have to choose for allies among

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[6] See Ludwell L. Montague, *Haiti and the United States, 1714–1938*, p. 48.

[7] Christophe did not encourage his people to purchase any of the extravagantly rich manufactures of Europe, but rather to keep their wants simple.

[8] Formerly Cap François, then Cap-Haïtien, but under Christophe renamed in his honor Cap-Henry; it is now Cap-Haïtien.

[103]

3: Leyburn 2-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

the still weak United States, France—the traditional enemy of Hai- 175
tians, and moribund Spain, who was in fact shortly to lose most of 439
her empire in the New World. Since he did not mean to drive his 648
people to work, he resolved to exploit to the full the benefits of
foreign trade in the hope that profits from exports would stimulate
production. As for allies, he cultivated the friendship of the United
States, but also sought to wean British merchants from the Northern
ports. To this end, although he levied duties of twelve per cent on [651]
goods of other nations, he reduced duties on English goods to
five per cent.[9]

Pétion, content to govern without an impressive court, gave the 175
greatest encouragement possible to trade; he sheared expenses and 439
managed to balance his budget. In 1818, for example, his revenues 652
were $2,646,000 and his expenses $2,144,000, giving the republic a
respectable surplus of $502,000.

Because Boyer was Pétion's disciple he followed in his predeces- 175
sor's footsteps, thus fixing in his quarter-century administration the 439
pattern of foreign trade under a tariff system. The Haitian élite seem 652
never to have taken to commercial enterprise, nor has the country
ever developed an economist even of fifth rank. Haitian thought, so
eloquently articulate along political lines, has simply never turned its
attention in any solid and serious way to economic problems. Nearly [441]
the whole of the foreign commerce of the republic from the earliest
days was conducted by foreign merchants resident in Haiti. This was [452]
partly because the credit of the Haitians was not so generally estab-
lished as to inspire confidence, but mostly it was due to lack of
interest of the people in foreign trade.

In the eighteenth century Saint-Domingue had been almost the 175
only colony producing such tropical products as sugar and coffee on 439
a large scale; the absence of effective competition accounted for most
of the prosperity of the French colony. In the nineteenth century, 656
however, competition developed rapidly; and at this very time the 441
laws and court decisions of Haiti began to hamper the business of
the foreign merchants dealing there. By Article 21 of Boyer's Law
of Patents, all persons engaging in any trade or profession except that
of cultivation of the soil must be provided with a license or patent;
all foreigners admitted as merchants into the republic must first
secure the president's permission to acquire a patent; and when

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[9] See the Arrêté of October 15, 1814.

175 finally the license was obtained, it authorized the foreigner to carry
459 on only a wholesale business—not with other foreign traders or with
656 any resident aliens, but with Haitians in the six open ports.[10] The
441 minimum of goods to be sold in any deal was fixed, so that no
foreigner could inadvertently enter the retail business. Such licenses cost between $1,600 and $2,000, sums so large that few foreigners were drawn to the island.

Quite obviously the government sought to keep the external trade of Haiti under its control; it is equally obvious that under the licensing system, with its high fees and strict surveillance, only a small number of dealers were attracted, who consequently monopolized what little trade there was. Retail business being prohibited to them, their imports had to be sold by Haitians.

175 Not even this necessity created a middle class in the country, for
565 the purchasing power of the peasants and other lower-caste Haitians
434 was small; also the total sum of imports and exports was not large
443 enough to support a middle class. The retail trade was chiefly in the
443 hands of town women. These marchandes, as they were called, em-
441 ployed a number of hucksters—likewise women—to traverse the
countryside surrounding the open ports, attend the markets, and report either every evening, or every week or month, depending upon their findings. The white man let his marchande know how much coffee he required, and this information was passed on to the local speculator who, at a very moderate profit, collected the coffee beans from the peasants in his neighborhood. Imports were distributed in like manner over the countryside. In its small way this system worked well enough, for the good faith of respectable marchandes could be counted upon both by the white trader and by the local dealers. A few European and American traders found it profitable to set up as marchandes the women with whom they cohabited, for this arrangement brought them nearer to the retail trade.

175 During Boyer's long administration the staple export was coffee,
439 still cultivated on a few remaining plantations but mostly picked
24 from plants growing wild, and sold by the peasants as their one
source of money income. Sugar disappeared almost wholly from the

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[504] [10] Namely, Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien, Gonaïves, Jacmel, Les Cayes, and Jérémie; from 1822 to 1844 there were also two open ports in the Spanish part of the island which, during those years, was a part of Haiti.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

list except in raw form, in which it had an annual sale of only a few 175
thousand pounds. Other subordinate exports were cotton, logwood, 439
lignum vitae, mahogany, tortoise shells, hides, cacao, cassia, wax, 24
ginger, bullocks' horns, and tobacco—and many of these came primarily from the Dominican rather than the Haitian part of the island, during the twenty-two year period of union. The imports were mainly clothing and provisions. That an agricultural country should need to bring in flour, butter, cheese, lard, beef, pork, candles, and especially—in the light of former days—refined sugar, is eloquent testimony to the degree to which food production had declined since colonial times. Other imports were more to be expected, since manufacture had never developed: linen, cotton goods of all kinds, some few woolens, cutlery, iron goods, wines and brandies, oil, lumber, coarse iron goods, earthenware, tin plates, and minor articles.[11]

Gone now were the days of big things in Haiti. Estates of thou- 175
sands of acres would in Boyer's time have been only a liability. 434
Profits were measured, or rather hoped for, in terms of hundreds 178
rather than thousands of dollars.[12] Saint-Domingue of the 1780's 24
was one of the exciting parts of the world to traders; Haiti of fifty 458
years later was little more than a vague name except to specialists. Any country relying for its economic security upon one crop and its sale in a foreign market must expect vicissitudes in its income. Haiti had these in full measure. And so the prosperity of the country steadily diminished.[13]

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[11] See the very careful report to Great Britain by her consul, Charles Mackenzie, in 1830: *Notes on Hayti*, II, 175-190. [113]

[12] Mackenzie (*Communications Received at the Foreign Office* [of Great Britain] *Relative to Hayti*, Document XI) reports in 1825: "Generally speaking, no sugar is manufactured on the estates devoted to the cultivation of the sugar cane; the juice is either inspissated to a coarse sirup, and sold for common use, or distilled into a very inferior rum, called here 'Tafia.'" Then, citing the case of Tor, an estate formerly owned by Pétion but in 1825 by Boyer, he reports: "Formerly 1,700 carreaux were in cane; 1,500 slaves were employed on it; 3 sugar mills were constantly at work, and excellent clayed sugar was made. Now only about 7 carreaux are in cultivation; 30 labourers are employed; the only produce is a little sirup and tafia, which last is retailed in a small shop by the side of the road, in front of the president's residence." [249] [257] [274]

[13] These vicissitudes have been frequently noted. Droughts and hurricanes, pests and earthquakes, were causes of constant apprehension. The chief forces at work to diminish Haitian prosperity were two: the division of land into small parcels at home, and the competition of other countries with Haitian coffee abroad. The price of coffee had declined in all the European markets, making the return to the cultivator exceedingly small.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 452 453 If contemporary testimony can be credited, the complete indifference of the Haitian élite to business was matched by their ignorance of finance when this was anything more complicated than cash payment transactions or face-to-face exchange. They seem to have been wholly unfamiliar with the uses of commercial paper, the meaning of overdrafts, or bills of exchange. Individual credit was not understood, nor was a signature enough to start a flow of business. As one person from France put it in 1846, "It takes 10,000 francs of money to do 10,000 francs of business."[14] If a merchant doing a good business found his purse empty and needed only to borrow in order to purchase other goods, that circumstance offered to his mind "a redoubtable extremity enveloped in profound mystery; and it is a rule of loyalty and of honor to which Haitian commerce is never false, that the paper on which a man has placed his signature should remain, until the day the loan is paid back, impenetrably shut up in the portfolio of the lender."

[426] Interest, if money could be borrowed at all, was at the rate of one per cent a day, three per cent a month, and from sixteen per cent to twenty per cent a year. Thus letters of credit and promissory notes never moved the slightest business transaction in the country. To seek credit was to confess one's financial embarrassment.

175 45 The economic ills which harassed Haiti under Boyer were, to a greater or less degree, the same that bedeviled the country for the rest of the century. It seems worth while to list them, for they reveal the mentality of the ruling clique and caste—a mentality which could see no reason for altering of these basic matters, and which during administration after administration devoted itself to superficialities. Haiti's weaknesses were not entirely due to folly and clumsiness, however, but to a perfectly natural ignorance. There was no background for economic thinking: how should ex-slaves with a handful of old freedmen be familiar with credit, banking, overdrafts, and the like? Even education in France would not necessarily offer enlightenment on these matters. "Culture" meant literature, not economics.

These, then, have been the major economic defects of Haiti, 1806 to 1915, due partly to ineptitude, partly to imperfect education:

175 454 648 1. The exclusion of all foreign or white investment, industry, and capital. One article in every constitution was given over to this

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[14] R. Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, *Saint-Domingue*, II, 187.

175 454 648 [829]

quarantine: "Haiti for the Haitians." At first the prohibition on white ownership of land and financial investment in the country was attributable to a fear of reënslavement; then to a fear that financial commitments (which no Haitian really understood) would somehow lead to political subjection; and always the feeling of pride, combined with a desperate need of self-justification, made the Haitians want to keep their country entirely under control of their own people. It is, of course, possible that if white people had been allowed free access to the country, they might have destroyed the "Black Republic"; excluding white men altogether, however, seriously curtailed economic activity.

175 701 434 [669]

2. Overmilitarization. The army, numerous out of all proportion to the population, took the ablest men out of production, drained the treasury, and was a constant source of revolutionary activity.

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3. Poor methods of agriculture. Critics often complained that Haiti ought to return to the system of large estates and forced labor; it apparently occurred to no one to suggest that education of the peasants might have made the land productive once more, by teaching the people new methods. Dividing up the land was an inevitable necessity unless every ruler were as willing as Christophe to be a dictator and as capable; but to keep the peasants in ignorance was not a necessity. Peasant landowners in Europe frequently tend their acres with skill, while in Haiti, with neither experience nor instruction in methods of tillage on small farms, the people developed steadily more destructive ways of farming.

175 441 439 648

4. Inefficient marketing. Assuming Haiti's dependence upon the staple crop of coffee and the handling of this crop by foreign merchants, every government seemed intent upon putting obstacles in the path of efficient marketing procedure.[15] The white trader could deal only with Haitians (who were ignorant in matters of international trade); although the foreigner had to pay a huge license fee in order to deal at all in Haitian products, he got no security in return, for he might not own land or obtain a lien on the real property of a citizen.[16] Banking and exchange facilities were wholly lacking. [453]

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[15] In 1833 Boyer thought to "encourage" Haitians to commercial effort by gradually expelling foreign traders, refusing to grant them any new licenses to trade. His scheme failed, for the élite were not interested. Indeed, the actual effect of his plan was to disrupt the steady flow of exports and increase discontent with Boyer on the part of the élite plantation owners whose small profits were momentarily interrupted.

[16] See James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, pp. 374 ff.

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441 Justice in the courts was administered by Haitians whose narrow
439 patriotism biased their decisions.

648 5. A temperamental tariff policy. Not only were imports subject
175 to a tariff which might be changed at the whim of any president, but
exports also were taxed. When an administration was in need of
651 funds it might suddenly, without warning, raise the tax on coffee
489 exports and so disrupt a merchant's business plans. The customs-houses were in charge of Haitians who steadily became more inefficient and grasping as the century progressed, until many foreign merchants felt that the only way of getting business dispatched was by means of bribes. Examinations at customs were long drawn out, often there was open thievery, and erroneous valuations were common.

175 6. The burden of the indemnity to France. Contracted by Boyer
652 in 1825, this annual payment for sixty years was an incubus to every
[648] administration, leaving no surplus in the treasury for public works, education, or any internal development; likewise, it made the threat of foreign interference all the more imminent.

7. A debased currency. Pétion was the first president to devalue money, and his example was frequently followed thereafter. Counterfeiting was general. When a country's monetary system is unstable, its officials accustomed to bribery and graft,[17] and its financial structure almost nonexistent, there is little chance for sound economic development.

175 8. Dependence upon a single crop. Haitian economy was tied to
245 the staple coffee, grown with indifferent care, prepared for the
[illegible] market in outmoded fashion, and sold in competition with coffee from more scientifically run plantations in other tropical countries.

175 9. Political instability. The recurrent revolutions in Haiti made
foreigners chary of participating in the country's business, since the
439 government which made a contract might be out of office before the
66 ink was dry.

175 10. Indifference of the élite to economic pursuits. What profits
were obtainable went into the pockets of foreign merchants, not
439 those of Haitian businessmen. In 1842 the comparative exports of the
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[643] [17] Sir Spenser St. John, always a bitter critic of Haiti, remarked (*Hayti, or The
Black Republic*, p. 88) sardonically that "Boyer had the rare quality of being honest,
[159] and left in the treasury, on his departure, the sum of £200,000, the first and last chief
[661] who was ever guilty of so unaccountable a weakness."

United Kingdom, the United States, and Haiti, in proportion to 175 population, were 185, 165, and 125,[18] yet Haiti had no carrying trade 565 while the other two countries had, and so the profits were drained 439 from the land.[19]

In short, as Haiti became accustomed to managing her own affairs, 178 she became content with—or at least, reconciled to—little things. 433 Inertia and tradition worked in their persistent fashion, with no effective stimulation from outside to combat them. From tradition and seclusion springs prejudice, and this became obvious whenever a change was proposed, particularly one which suggested bringing white people back to the country. To the élite it might mean the end [461] of their social supremacy; to the masses, the end of their independence of daily action. The prejudice against sugar making was rooted in the same kind of suspicion. When a large landowner tried to institute a sugar mill on his estate, he met an adamant refusal of his hired workers to labor in it: "*Moué pas esclave!*" (I'm no slave!) The Negroes even disliked a bell to ring them to work on a plantation, for it suggested the slavery of the old régime.

Just before the Civil War in the United States a humanitarian 1751 gentleman developed a project of conducting numerous free Ameri- 649 can Negroes to Haiti in a planned migration. He discussed in a 105 pamphlet[20] all the possible trades which might flourish in that country, if the migrants were to assume the position of a middle class; but his list is significantly small—sixteen occupations, on the order of tailoring, coopering, and blacksmithing, were all he could think of.[21] He made three comments which he hoped would attract the Negro Americans, as to a virgin field of opportunity: that in the

[18] John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, pp. 111–113, cites these figures, and says: "[Thus] Hayti, poor, and despised as she is, has a commerce, *in native produce*, nearly three-fourths as large, *in proportion to her population*, as our own United Kingdom, which is the great manufacturing part of the world; and seven-eighths as large as that of the United States, where the staple exports are produced by the labour of 3,000,000 slaves!" [433]

[19] Mackenzie (*Communications Received at the Foreign Office* [of Great Britain] *Relative to Hayti*, Document V) reports that in 1825 exports were valued at $5,793,758, and imports at $4,660,174; the trading was carried on in 552 *foreign* ships, of which 374 were American, 78 British, and 65 French. No Haitian ship traded abroad.

[20] Benjamin S. Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans*. See particularly pp. 3–9.

[21] His complete list is: tailor, shoemaker, baker, cabinetmaker, carpenter, mason, lime-burner, distiller, cooper, wheelwright, saddler, blacksmith, tinner, hatter, small-boat maker, potter.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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towns there was a surplus of shopkeepers, but nothing like enough producers of goods; that in the country few Haitians of intelligence and capital paid any attention to agriculture; and that Haiti needed more than anything else people of brains, not afraid of physical activity, and people with capital. The author had observed well. His characterization of the Haiti of 1860 was still true fifty years later.

[p. 263]

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PART V

MODERN HAITI

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XV

HAITIAN PROBLEMS

FOR a citizen of the United States or a European country, 178
national problems have to do with external as well as internal 66
affairs. Foreign relations, armaments, international trade,
treaties and commitments, loom as large as do unemployment, business 648
depression, labor troubles, and social maladjustment. Political parties
rise and fall with their promises or failures to deal successfully with
matters arising from the country's position relative to world movements.
In Haiti such generalizations do not hold. Her international
relations have been and are comparatively minor, while her internal
problems have been of a different order from those which trouble
most of the rest of the Western World. This is not meant to imply
that a world depression leaves Haiti unscathed, or that the country
does not suffer when its trade in coffee is interrupted, but rather that
its persistent problems would continue to exist whatever the state of
world politics and economics.

Contacts of the Haitian people with the outside world between 175
1804 and 1915 were meagre. The slaughter of whites by Dessalines, 648
the economic decline of the country, unwillingness of white nations
to treat with a Negro state, the schism in the Catholic Church,
restrictive legislation against white foreigners, general illiteracy of
the people—all these shut Haiti off from the world. Christophe, it is
true, invited in a few English schoolmasters and agricultural experts, [871]
but these remained only a short while and had little influence even [242]
among the élite. For a century Haiti saw no foreigners except the [797]
few traders at seaports, an occasional Wesleyan missionary, a limited
number of consuls and ministers, certain travelers interested in odd
corners of the earth, and, after 1860, Catholic priests and sisters. For
the peasants there ceased to be any knowledge of the world outside
of Haiti; for the élite France once more became the centre of the
social universe, as it had been for the affranchis in colonial times.
From Boyer's time onward élite youths went to Paris for an education, [871]
if they could afford it; the "culture" they acquired there had
little relationship to Haitian problems.

Foreign relations, in the political sense, revolved during most of [illegible]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Foreign relations, in the political sense, revolved during most of

175 648 the nineteenth century about loans and insurrections. Haiti maintained legations in those countries to which she exported most of her coffee and from which she might obtain credit. Revolutionary leaders sometimes promised as a bait for foreign assistance either tariff preferences or the cession of Môle Saint Nicolas for a naval base; if successful, they might fulfill the first promise but, because of the Monroe Doctrine and the watchful jealousy of the big powers, the Môle was never ceded. The United States had varied dealings with Haiti. Before the Civil War there was more than one movement to transplant freed slaves from this country to Haiti; after the war the United States came very near annexing Haiti; and negotiations over the cession of the Môle did not end until America acquired Guantanamo Bay, across the Windward Passage in Cuba, as a naval base to guard the entrance to the Caribbean.[1]

It was finally the combination of complicated economic affairs and political collapse which produced the Occupation of 1915. In the
175 652 457 preceding year both France and Germany threatened to send warships to collect loans due them, and were stopped only by the outbreak of the World War. An American bank held as its subsidiary the Bank of Haiti, in which the government deposited its funds; when in 1914–15 the presidents followed each other in rapid succession, the bank on instructions from New York refused to allow the government to withdraw its funds. Haiti in retaliation threatened to seize its deposits by force, but the New York bank persuaded the United States government to send a ship to transfer the gold from Port-au-Prince to New York. There were other financial complications, particularly those relating to defaulted payments to a railroad
175 648 [579] company. What finally precipitated the Occupation, however, was anarchy. When, in July, 1915, President Sam slaughtered 168 political prisoners and was himself mobbed and murdered, the American government ordered the landing of its Marines from a warship conveniently anchored in the harbor near Port-au-Prince.[2]

From 1915 to 1934 the foreign affairs of Haiti were under the direction of the United States, whose main concern was to order the economic relations of the country in such fashion that Haiti should

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[1] The foreign relations of Haiti with the United States have been clearly treated in Ludwell L. Montague, *Haiti and the United States*, 1714–1938.

[2] One of the best accounts of the events leading up to the Occupation is that of H. P. Davis, *Black Democracy*.

not find herself constantly embroiled with European states and 175
American financial interests. The Haitian debt was funded, and a 648
financial adviser remained in the country even after the Occupation [457]
came to an end. It is expected that by 1943 the last debt will be paid;
the financial adviser, however, withdrew in 1941. Since the Occupation, although the republic has been free to manage her own affairs,
she has consulted frequently with the State Department in Washington.

Nineteen years of occupation ended the century of Haitian isola- 175
tion. The Americans built roads, conducted health campaigns, made 648
their presence felt even in remote hamlets and valleys. American
authors, political, romantic, and sensational, discovered the Antillean
republic. Steamship companies stopped their cruises for a few hours [491]
at Cap-Haïtien to allow tourists to visit the Citadel, and at Port-au-
Prince to see the sights of the capital. Every Haitian now realizes [744]
that there is a world outside.

Whatever crises have arisen in Haitian affairs, certain problems 175
have persisted. For whom do they constitute a source of worry? Since 642
the government has always been a dictatorship, limited or absolute,
subject to no party control, the incumbents of office have never had 65
the experience of being constantly reminded by their opponents of
the misery or daily worries of the population. After a hundred years
the people have learned that relief is not to be expected from politi-
cians. Occasionally a dramatic revolutionary leader has persuaded [669]
some of the people that the officials in power were responsible for
their distress, and so worked up a following; yet even when such
movements succeeded, the masses never benefited. To most govern- [669]
ments of the past century Haiti's problem has been only one: to
frustrate insurrection. There is evidence that recent administrations
have busied themselves assiduously with the country's internal problems, although none of them has been adequately solved. The élite,
at least as a group, do not feel any apparent responsibility for the
maladjustments, nor obligation to effect the necessary reforms. A
few patriots, and those almost without exception not in office, know
what ails the country and say so; a smaller number propose reason- [161]
able solutions. The problems remain. Of these the three outstanding [164]
are overpopulation with all its accompanying ills, health, and [871]
education.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

1. *Overpopulation*

161 Two and a half or possibly three million people live within 10,200 square miles. These figures, if they are to convey a reality, must be conceived in more familiar terms. Haiti is just about the size of Vermont, but has six times as many people crowded together among its mountains In a list of countries still independent in 1935 Haiti ranked among the first ten in density of population, yet its economic life was agricultural, while the other nine have a high degree of industrialization.

161 171 As one looks at a full-page map of the Western Hemisphere it is difficult even to find the tiny wisp of color which marks the Caribbean republic of Haiti. Of the twenty-two American countries, including Canada, Haiti is next to last in size (El Salvador is smaller), yet ranks thirteenth in population, and far and away the first in *density* of population, in the whole hemisphere. The figures are revealing:

Country	*Population*	*Area in Square Miles*	*Density*
1. United States	131,669,275	3,026,701	43.5
2. Brazil	43,246,931	3,275,510	13.2
3. Mexico	19,478,791	763,944	25.5
4. Argentina	12,762,000	1,078,278	11.7
5. Canada	11,012,724	3,694,863	2.9
6. Colombia	8,730,000	448,794	19.4
7. Peru	6,600,000	532,184	12.3
8. Chile	4,626,508	296,717	15.6
9. Cuba	4,108,650	41,164	99.8
10. Venezuela	3,451,677	352,051	9.8
11. Bolivia	3,426,296	537,792	6.3
12. Guatemala	3,044,490	45,452	67.0
13. Haiti	3,000,000	10,204	294.9

161 Haiti's density per square mile is therefore greater than that of China or India—two world examples of overpopulation—and even greater than that of New York State, with its enormous city areas. Haiti's largest town has a population of 100,000; there are seven towns ranging from 7,500 to 20,000. The density of distribution through the countryside is therefore evident.

Beside the figures given above must be set those of the government

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budget, which is annually in the neighborhood of $7,000,000, and of 652
its annual imports and exports, neither of which generally exceeds [439]
$10,000,000 a year. Chicago, with its population of three million,
has an annual budget of about $275,000,000, aside from state and
federal services.

To care for all the needs of three million people in Haiti there is a
sum of money less than that available annually to several of our
American universities. Out of the seven million dollars must come
all salaries of officials, legislators, judges, policemen, schoolteachers;
the wages of all janitors and day laborers employed by the government;
the upkeep of all schools, roads, lighthouses, experiment
stations; the maintenance of such important public services as health,
sanitation, education, soil development, reforestation. Since there [369]
are few towns, practically every improvement which takes place
must be paid for by the central government.

Haiti's growth in population is not a new thing. It has been in- 161
creasing steadily since 1804 while the soil of the country was being (134]
worn out and foreign trade grew stagnant. The country is entirely [439]
agricultural, there being absolutely no manufacturing industry worth
the name. The people consequently live upon a subsistence economy. 433
The soil is still fertile enough to preserve life in the teeming popula- 164
tion, though undernourishment is general. Most of the people have [134]
no "artificial" wants and could not satisfy them under present con- [511]
ditions even if they had.

Assuming the census of Dessalines in 1805 to be even approxi- 161
mately accurate, the population is now eight times what it was then. 433
The working of the Law of Population[3] is implacable: if population 178
increases while economic efficiency remains static or declines, either
there will be an increasing death rate or the standard of living must
sink—or both. In the case of Haiti, economic efficiency is certainly [165]
not what it was under the forced-labor system of Dessalines: the [511]
death rate has been continuously high; it is the standard of living
which has suffered.

To grasp the import of Haiti's problem of overpopulation one

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[3] "Population tends to increase up to the limit of the supporting power of the land, [114]
relative to the economic efficiency and to the standard of living of the people at the
time." (For an amplification of this discussion on overpopulation, see the note on
p. 320.) The law of population as stated here is a modification of that given by Sumner
and Keller, *The Science of Society*, I, 46; their statement, in turn, is that of Malthus with
the added cultural items of economic efficiency and the standard of living.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

To grasp the import of Haiti's problem of

270 over-population one

THE HAITIAN PEOPLE

166 should imagine the number of Vermonters sextupled, working with
433 hand tools and using methods which their great-grandfathers would
171 have considered antiquated; imagine the state with only a hundred
511 miles of paved roads, with no harnessed water power, no substantial
fortunes, no middle class; imagine the farms gullied and worn out; ninety-five per cent of the people illiterate and undernourished; the state having no industry and practically no goods imported from New York, Massachusetts, or any other part of the United States. Under such conditions the low standard of living would be readily understandable.

Haiti might also be compared with Mississippi. Less than a quarter the size of that American state, it nevertheless has a larger population. Both Haiti and Mississippi are agricultural, with few towns, although no part of Haiti now has land as richly fertile as that of the Yazoo Delta. The low standard of living of the Mississippi share-cropper, whether Negro or white, is notorious—yet he has access to a few of the perquisites of civilization, whether these be elementary schools or moving pictures; the Haitian peasant lacks even these. In America the undercurrent of feeling is that something should be, probably eventually will be, done to improve the lot of the share-cropper. Certainly there is wealth enough in the country at large to alleviate conditions where they are deemed to be socially unhealthy. Not so in Haiti: the land is poorer, the numbers even greater, the area much smaller; and there is no wealth in the country, nor enough social vision among the upper classes to deal with the relentless increase of numbers.

168 How conceivably might this problem be dealt with? The first answer which would occur to many Americans, namely, birth control, is out of the question at present. Expense would stand in the way of its use by people who hardly ever see money; the peasants, unable to read, suspicious of new-fangled ways, untouched by all efforts to "uplift" them, and with no educational agencies, could
[795] hardly be converted to the use of contraceptives; while the Catholic Church, which until now has not had to raise its voice against birth control in Haiti, would fight any proposal to introduce it as it fought the campaign in Puerto Rico.

167 Another possible answer is migration. This solution many Haitians
648 have tried without prompting. With little money available for

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

travel, the peasants are limited in their migrations to near-by countries; specifically Cuba, which can be reached by sailing vessels, and the Dominican Republic. For many years there was a seasonal migration from Haiti to each of these neighboring countries, where wages on the sugar plantations, although low, have been better than nothing. Native Cubans and Dominicans, however, have quite understandably resented the influx of cheap labor which throws them out of work, depresses the wage scale, and thwarts efforts to improve working conditions; as the tide of Haitian immigration to the two adjacent countries increased during the 'twenties and the depression period of the 'thirties, resentment flamed into action. Murders occurred; ships to Cuba were not allowed to land; workmen were beaten and otherwise persecuted. In 1937 the Cuban dictator, Batista, expelled thousands of Haitians from the island. But the climax was reached in the autumn of the same year when the news gradually leaked out that in the Dominican Republic thousands of Haitians had been murdered in cold blood. It was estimated at that time that as many as 60,000 Haitians were living across the border; of these, certainly as many as 5,000 were butchered or drowned, and it is likely that 20,000 would be a more accurate figure if the whole truth were known.[4] In the world at the present time there seems to be no haven for penniless migrants, particularly illiterate blacks. 167 648

Even if Haiti could devise within her tiny budget a way to finance a whole series of public works, the problem of overpopulation would not be solved. Expenditures for internal improvements would merely lessen unemployment for the time being; it would not prevent the people from having large families of undernourished children. 161

It is easy enough to say that the problem of overpopulation could be solved by a combination of birth control, education, improvement of the soil and of agricultural techniques, introduction of manufacture, and public works projects. Each of these "solutions" is a major problem in itself, considering the limitations of the country. 168

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[4] This massacre was protested with all diplomatic vigor by Haiti. The gendarmerie, since the American Occupation the only military force in the country, numbered only 2,900 men and was no match for the military power of the Dominican Republic, so that diplomatic protest to the American nations was the only course open to President Vincent. A joint committee of the United States, Mexico, and Cuba investigated and awarded Haiti damages of $750,000, of which the Dominican government (meaning Trujillo) immediately paid $250,000, promising the rest in installments. [648]

2. *Health*

440 Historians who seek to explain the rise and fall of nations in terms of a single cause might do worse than hit upon health and disease as the all-important explanation. Unless spectacular epidemics have appeared in a country's history, the average person is rarely aware of how diet may affect a people, or of how backwardness in achievement is often directly related to disease. It may well be that the development of *medical* history will yet cause a radical revision of certain philosophies of history.

146 164 "The diet of the Haitian peasants has not improved since the slavery period," says Dr. Camille Lhérisson.[5] When people are hungry in Haiti, they eat (if they can find food) until their hunger has been appeased; but what they eat, though it may fill their stomachs, is often decidedly deficient in the proper nourishment. Mangoes, yams, and beans are common enough so that few people actually go hungry; eggs, milk, meat, and many other essentials of a balanced diet, on the contrary, are scarce. People do not die of hunger, but rather of the diseases which accompany malnutrition. It is said that many peasants allow the fires in their homes to die out when the mangoes begin to ripen, subsisting almost wholly upon this fruit for weeks. One sees nearly naked children whose distended [261] bellies are testimony to faulty diet. There are frequent cases of geophagy (eating of dirt) both by children and by adults in their unreasoned craving for certain dietetic elements; one result of the practice is the swallowing of eggs and larvae of intestinal parasites.

178 743 759 114 164 Scientific progress in medicine during the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth passed Haiti by completely. There were during the whole history of the country until 1915 hardly a score of reputable physicians; even had there been doctors, hospital facilities and equipment were lacking. Dr. Robert P. Parsons describes Haiti in 1915 as "an unspeakable hotbed of diseases, ranking second to none in the world in downright rottenness." He further described the "mass of three million people, sick, suffering beyond all power of words to describe, crippled, and weakened from the ravages of a host of diseases (for the most part preventable and curable), pitifully helpless and hopelessly resigned to their lot."[6]

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[5] "Diseases of the Peasants of Haiti," *American Journal of Public Health*, XXV, No. 8 (August, 1935), 924.

[6] *History of Haitian Medicine* (New York, 1930), pp. 4-5.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

So it had been with the subject peoples of the island ever since its 175
discovery. The Spaniards introduced a wide variety of European 164
diseases to Española (an epidemic of smallpox in 1500 was estimated to have killed 200,000 Indians in the island) which did not disappear as the Indians gave way to Negroes. Three centuries of the slave trade brought blacks from many parts of Africa, and with them most of the deadliest plagues of that continent. During the flourishing days of French control over Saint-Domingue, Negro slaves were afflicted by a wide variety of diseases, the commonest being yaws, tetanus, intestinal worms, malaria, leprosy, smallpox, and scrofula, although others were certainly not absent. Only to yellow fever, probably brought with them from Africa, did the blacks seem to develop a certain immunity. Most plantations had a doctor in [759]
attendance, but medical skill during the eighteenth century was not advanced enough to cope successfully with scourges whose cause was then unknown.

After freedom there were fewer doctors than ever, less sanitation, 175
and a worse diet. When a person was ill, his one alternative to suffer- 759
ing the disease to take its course was to consult the Vodun priest, for 756
the commonly accepted explanation of disease was a spiritual one.
If God (that is, the Christian God) had sent the illness, nothing could 753
be done except to bear it, for God's will was unalterable; if it were the result of magic worked by some enemy, the identity of that enemy and the magical means used must be ferreted out so that countermagic might be employed. Vodun practitioners were, in- 755
deed, quite as important in their rôle of healing as in performing strictly religious rites. In the course of their efforts to cure disease they often stumbled upon homely but effective cures; no doubt also the mental effect of the patient's faith sometimes helped him to recover, even when the medicines administered had no specific value.

The "triple threat" to Haitian health is the morbid group: malaria, 164
hookworm, and yaws. The first two are familiar enough in parts of the United States, and require only short comment. For centuries malaria has sapped the vitality of people in southern lands, giving them a reputation for indolence which is not wholly deserved. Haitian peasants were during the entire nineteenth century accused of laziness; when a strapping man lay all day in the shade of a tree, it was logical enough for a white visitor to suppose that he was willfully loafing. The critics might have been more temperate if they had known what it was to be perpetually full of malaria, with a body

164 apparently hale and hearty, but lassitude sapping all energy. A group 744 of doctors from the Rockefeller Foundation discovered that among 164 4,439 persons examined in various surveys two decades ago sixty-seven per cent showed malarial parasites in the blood. Since the American Occupation steps have been taken to control the disease and much progress has resulted: some of the towns are now practically free of it. But the battle against malaria will never be won so long as the anopheles mosquito breeds in the island; it means an endless war of constant vigilance as well as education—one which must be carried on simultaneously in the neighboring Dominican Republic.

Hookworm, like malaria, is also ordinarily quite undramatic in its symptoms. There is no specific pain, but rather a progressive inertia. Since practically every country person goes barefoot it would be miraculous if hookworm were not widespread, for sanitation is entirely lacking in peasant communities. Dr. Lhérisson reported in 1935 that twenty-six per cent of the mass of Haitian people examined [369] up to that time had been found infested by hookworms. The final figure will probably be revised upward, for the persons most easily [291] examined are townspeople who have better sanitation and more shoes. Only the Cul-de-Sac plain, extending east from Port-au-Prince, is free of the disease, for the larvae do not develop in salty ground. Hookworm attacks not only the barefoot, but likewise the [261] well shod. Poor sanitation and geophagy suggest themselves as two explanations of this fact.

Like malaria, hookworm has been accepted calmly enough as one of the normal burdens of life. In slave days and for some time thereafter it was called "stomach trouble," and since it was common, was not even a case for the Vodun practitioner. It was not until 1924 that the Rockefeller Foundation through its Payne mission revealed the significance of the disease and began to establish dispensaries in [291] country districts and undertake a campaign of sanitation. If every Haitian were to wear shoes the incidence of the disease would, of course, decidedly decrease; but the advice to wear shoes is a counsel of perfection, for large peasant families are no more able to afford this luxury than all American families are able to buy champagne and caviar. Progress has been made along the lines of hygiene and sanitation, but hookworm continues to undermine the energy of the people.

164 Yaws is, of the morbid triad, the most virulent and the common-

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

est. It was brought over from Africa apparently as early as 1509.[7] Oviedo describes it in 1526 as "a terrible pustular disease."[8] It so closely resembles syphilis that it has often been mistaken for that malady.[9] Untreated or wrongly treated it ravages the bodies of its victims, making them loathesome to behold. In the neighborhood of Port-au-Prince the Rockefeller staff found, out of 2,564 persons examined, 78 per cent affected with yaws. What is even more disturbing is that the young are afflicted. Dr. Lhérisson's investigations in one district revealed that 61.1 per cent of the cases were of children under ten. 164

An American, Dr. Paul Wilson, in 1922 first called yaws the primary physical curse of Haiti. He insisted "that the first need of rural Haiti was soap, salvarsan, and sunshine, and that the good Lord would furnish the sunshine."[10] The Haitian government immediately began to spend large sums to combat the disease. In the Jacmel region in one year (1925–26) 167,267 cases of yaws were treated; in 1926 over 200,000 injections of arsenicals against the disease were administered throughout the republic; and by 1931 the Public Health Service had given in twelve years 2,655,386 injections. Progress has been swift, but the fight against yaws is one which has to be waged continually. 164 744

It would probably be not far from the truth to say that for two centuries the majority of Haitian Negroes have been afflicted to a greater or less degree with malaria, hookworm, and yaws, either singly or together. Next to these dire diseases comes a group which seems to have affected from a tenth to one half the population: tuberculosis, dysentery, enteritis, and granular conjunctivitis. Tuberculosis progresses rapidly when it appears. The people have never developed a specific immunity to it, and promiscuous sex relations play their part in spreading the disease by contagion. In seven hundred autopsies performed in one year at the General Hospital of Port-au-Prince, twenty-six per cent of the deaths were due to tuberculosis. Spring water in the country districts is frequently pol- 164 [836] [837] [165]

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[7] M. G. Levacher, *Guide médical des Antilles* (Paris, 1847), p. 280.

[8] Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés, *La Historia natural y general de las Indias* (Madrid, 1558).

[9] Dr. Parsons, *History of Haitian Medicine*, p. xviii, speaks of it as "blood brother of European syphilis, if not the same disease modified by age incidence, social environment, and racial difference."

[10] *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

164 [364] [272] Spring water in the country districts is frequently polluted by all sorts of excreta; the watering of milk is a common practice, and samples of milk have been generally found to contain many times the normal amount of bacilli. The cases of tuberculosis are practically always complicated by malaria.

Dysentery, when caused by bacilli, is epidemic in nature. In Haiti this form, known as "colerin," annually affects about a quarter of the rural population. Another type, caused by a variety of amoeba, affects another ten or twenty per cent, according to the region. [146] [273] [853] Enteritis is less serious than dysentery but just as prevalent, being caused by protozoa and intestinal worms. Poor diet, the abuse of alcohol, premature weaning, and unwise nursing are also responsible. Granular conjunctivitis affected sixteen per cent of the children examined by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Cancer seems to strike only a normal number of Haitians; goitre is common in the mountain districts; leprosy has become a menace in the West and South; elephantiasis is present, particularly in the South; gusarola (characterized by patches of skin assuming different color) is fairly common in the Cul-de-Sac plain; chicken pox, influenza, and meningitis epidemics are occasionally serious.

164 462 482 145 The health of the peasant women is seriously and continuously endangered by their mode of life and work. It is customary for females, from girlhood onward, to carry heavy burdens on their heads—over steep paths in the mountains, along rocky trails, up hill and down. The commonest sight in Haiti is to see a woman swinging along with a great load of fuel, a tin of water, a bundle of building material, a basket of fruit, on her head. Cranial bones are flattened, the spine is bent, internal organs are strained or damaged. For ill-nourished persons to carry heavy weights for long distances with [461] [843] little rest means undue pressure on the heart and lungs, and so an increasing tendency to cardiac and pulmonary infections as well as chronic anemia. Overwork frequently results in miscarriages.

844 [846] [164] 853 As has been said, childbirth often occurs by the roadside, on the way to market, or in the market place. In no case can a peasant woman remain in bed for a proper period either before or after parturition. Midwives are untrained; they use primitive methods which inevitably result in defective development of infants, lessened resistance to disease, high infant mortality, and a prevalence of abdominal diseases in women. Pressure of work, whether in the field or on the way to market, makes a mother soon stop nursing her

baby: when she does she substitutes a mode of feeding on fruits and 853
solids which favors digestive disturbance and nutritive diseases in
the infant.

At the age when children of the élite would be starting to school, 857
peasant children are beginning work in the fields, hoeing, weeding, 752
and carrying, always under the tropical sun. Cuts and bruises, sometimes 184
serious, are improperly treated when they occur and so lead 164
to tetanus or to enormous ulcers.

Hard work and a simple mode of outdoor life prove, in Haiti at 164
least, not to be the keys to good health which a romantic might
fancy them. Haiti has been one of the unhealthiest places in the
world. One feels that it has been lucky to escape such scourges as
typhus, cholera, and bubonic plague; that smallpox has not been
violent in its epidemics, and that the people developed an immunity
to yellow fever. It has, indeed, been luck rather than cleanliness and
proper medical care which has protected the people in these instances.

In 1838 Boyer founded a hospital school at Port-au-Prince, giving 874
it the name of The National School of Medicine. It did not function
as a school, however, until 1860 when Geffrard reorganized it and
gave it life. Geffrard also sent young men to Europe to study, installed
laboratories of physics and chemistry in the upper schools of
the capital, and made possible the appearance of an intellectual élite.[11]
The next burst of energy in matters of hygiene came around 1890 744
when, under the influence of Dr. Léon Audain, the first health 742
records were kept, and the spirit of scientific research reached Haitian
medicine.

From 1804 to 1860, then, there was practically no proper care for 744
sick people. In the latter years of the century a few trained physicians, 759
with sadly deficient equipment, practiced in the towns. Not
until after the Occupation was the rural mass of the population even
touched by the medical knowledge which had been developing all
over the civilized world for decades. Clinics, wholesale vaccinations
and inoculations, and campaigns of enlightenment have in the past
twenty years worked wonders. The Vodun practitioner, however, 756
still is the "expert" who treats most illnesses, and healing remains
one of his major functions.

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[11] Geffrard established schools of law, music, painting, and navigation. The latter [873]
two collapsed. The same president founded the high schools of Port-au-Prince,
Jacmel, and Gonaïves.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

3. *Education*

871 To a people like the Americans who accept democracy as desirable, and regard universal education as a necessary basis for democracy, it would seem a simple matter for the Haitians to build schools all over the countryside, pass laws requiring attendance, and so within a decade, or at the outside a generation, reform the whole country. To the American, education is the fount from which all democratic blessings flow. For the Haitian the problem is neither so clearly defined nor so simply solved.

565 871 The élite, who are solidly in control of the government, are aristocrats partly (largely, one might even say) because they are educated. Because of the maxim of Haitian life since the beginning that a literate man should not do manual labor, any program which proposed universal education would cut the ground from under the present social structure by giving the masses equal opportunities with the élite, and at the same time ruin the economic organization by making peasants want to desert field labor for professions and business. An ordinary degree of self-interest is quite sufficient to explain the lack of enthusiasm of the ruling class when the subject of general education is broached.

871 Good reasons are often given by people in lieu of real reasons for their actions. One of the good reasons advanced by Haitian ministries for the failure of the government to promote universal education is its cost. Those American states whose population is prevailingly rural know the validity of this reasoning. With children [369] scattered over the rural regions—and nine out of ten Haitians do not live in towns or large villages—it would require thousands of new school buildings to reach the prospective students. Salaries of teachers, purchase of supplies, and general upkeep would have to be added annually to the national budget in addition to the initial outlay for the erection of school buildings. Here one comes up immediately against the unyielding fact of the puny national income. Its $7,000,000 could under no circumstances be stretched to cover an architectural program commensurate with Haiti's educational needs.

871 178 Another good reason for the failure of democratic education is the demonstrated apathy of the masses. In the zeal for improvement during the early days of the Occupation, rural schools were estab-

lished in many parts of the country. Attendance was fair for a few 871
days, then rapidly declined. It is obviously a task requiring patience, 178
persistence, originality, and tact on the part of the teacher to keep
the students interested enough in school to make them attend regularly,
for certainly the parents, who themselves have had no education,
will not force their children to attend. On the contrary, the
average peasant parent feels it much more important for his children
to be at work in the fields, doing something useful, than to waste
time learning to read and write—accomplishments which peasants
have done without from time immemorial. Forced attendance is
clearly out of the question. Obviously, too, at the small wages paid [875]
to country teachers the necessary qualities of personality are uncommon,
to say the least. Five thousand men and women with the
consecration of missionaries would be required even to begin the
work of general education.

A practically insoluble problem, given current attitudes, is that of 871
the language to be used in rural schools, assuming that these are 191
built. The only official language of Haiti is French; the only language
understood by the masses is Créole, which in spite of its French origin 875
is as different from that tongue as Dutch from German. Now every 184
Haitian, high and low, knows Créole, so that the question immediately
arising is: Why should not the rural teachers teach in Créole?
The answer involves every sort of inward prejudice, yearning, and
instilled doctrine. The teacher is almost sure to be struggling up to
the élite class, and to require him to deny himself the luxury of
speaking French (to him almost a patent of nobility) would be
heart-rending. Likewise, he would have his "good" reason for
teaching school in French: the unity of the country demands a single
language; all schoolbooks are in French, none in Créole; and Créole
has no literature, nor even an accepted spelling. The fact remains
that except in rare instances all schoolteachers use French to their
pupils, and not one peasant out of a hundred can even guess what is
being said in that language.

Assuming that schools were available, as well as trained teachers 871
willing to speak the folk language, the next problem would be the
curriculum. The whole tradition of élite education is literary, not
practical. Teachers trained in this tradition might teach Racine and
Montaigne, but not soil conservation and new methods of planting.
Peasants with a knowledge of French literature would, of course, be

871 no longer peasants. What good would a literary education do them? Yet those who have advocated a technical or practical curriculum have been met with a perfect storm of opposition. Such training would, it has been argued, merely augment and perpetuate the social stratification of the country; moreover, since no Haitian élite have been technically trained nor had any desire to be, the teaching of the whole rural mass would have to be in the hands of aliens—
[875] white Americans, more than likely. Once again, it is a matter of current attitudes: the rural teacher keen to rise out of the masses into the upper class would, if the curriculum were technical, be required to abandon the gratifying display of his literary knowledge, and devote his talents instead to the manual skills from which he had been trying to escape.

871 875 It is hardly necessary to mention the insuperable problem of training the teachers and persuading them to dedicate their lives to rural education: to live away from the amenities of urban life, at a minute salary, among an ignorant peasantry. Only the devotion of rare patriots would prompt such complete self-sacrifice, even if the government had a tithe of the funds necessary for educating teachers for their jobs and paying them a living wage.

175 871 A glance at Haitian history will also help to explain the sorry state of education. In 1804, of course, there was not a single school in the country, and Dessalines was too much preoccupied with other affairs to give the matter a thought; besides, being illiterate himself, he may well have thought learning unimportant, or at least, embarrassing. Both Christophe and Pétion showed an exemplary zeal for education, although the results accomplished by them seem small enough. They were both impressed by the Lancasterian method then in vogue in England, and modeled the few schools they sponsored upon it. Christophe, always an Anglophile, established five "*grandes écoles nationales*" at Cap-Henry, Port-de-Paix, Sans Souci, Gonaïves, and Saint-Marc, with English masters at the head of each.[12] Pétion established at Port-au-Prince a Lycée Haïtien in 1816, and assigned an "instructeur" in every parish. The curriculum of the Lycée—ancient and modern languages, rhetoric, logic, ethics, elements of mathematics, ancient and modern history, geography, and drawing—is an indication of the limited scope of the program. It was purely

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[12] Placide Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique de l'île d'Hayti, Saint-Domingue*, pp. 334-335.

for the élite, and was purely cultural. By 1828 there were lower schools in six towns of the country, but only one higher school in the whole of Haiti.[13] 175 871

A report on the condition of education in 1842 showed that the Lycée still existed, its curriculum now limited to French, English, Spanish, Latin, mathematics, composition, history, and fencing.[14] Only 150 students were enrolled. By 1843 there were eleven secondary schools. The question was even raised whether Boyer's failure to promote education during the twenty-five tranquil years of his rule might not have been deliberate, on the principle that it is easier to govern ignorance than knowledge.[15] Actually, however, there was little pressure for education, and so Boyer did nothing.

Geffrard more than any other president of the nineteenth century encouraged education, with the result that almost 20,000 children received some kind of schooling. The census of 1875 made the following estimates:[16]

4	lyceums	with	543 pupils
6	girls' high schools		563
5	girls' secondary schools		350
165	primary schools		11,784
200	rural schools		5,939
1	medical school		25
1	school of music		46
	Total		19,250 pupils

[162]

To these must be added a few pupils in private schools and in the recently established Catholic schools of the Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne and the Sisters of Cluny. [797]

Toward the turn of the century, when reformers were writing books while the whole country seemed to be slowly dying under its stupid presidents, many a proposal was made which hit squarely upon the need of education and the necessity of a specifically practical curriculum. Joseph Justin[17] urged technical training by experts, and many others hammered away at the same idea. A small sum

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[13] Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Hayti*, I, 83, 120–122, 158.
[14] John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, pp. 74 ff.
[15] Mark B. Bird, *The Black Man* (New York, 1869), p. 140.
[16] Cited by Sir Spenser St. John, *Hayti, or The Black Republic*, p. 293.
[17] *Étude sur les institutions haïtiennes* (Paris, 1894–95), 2 vols.

175 871 was put into the national budget to be used for schools, but it seems generally to have been used as a fund for presidential patronage. There were even "school teachers" who could not read, but were nevertheless paid a regular monthly stipend. The principal of the Lycée at Gonaïves could neither read nor write, the music teacher there knew not a note of music, and the medical director could not name the simplest drugs.[18] Dantès Bellegarde, one of Haiti's notable intellectuals, as a minister under Nord Alexis (1902–8) made definite proposals which, had they been carried out, would have gone far toward effecting a radical reform. Minister again under Oreste (1913–14), he succeeded in building up an educational fund, but before he could spend it properly Oreste was deposed and the money used by his successor, Zamor, for military purposes.[19]

175 87 By 1915, before the Occupation began, the country had about 730 public schools. Of these, 6 gave advanced courses in medicine, law, applied science, and commerce; 10 offered a secondary classical education; 8 were special secondary boys' schools; and 15 were special secondary girls' schools. The teachers all got their training in Haiti, and the curricula and methods were almost entirely French.[20] Bellegarde had divided the country into 14 school districts, and by 1919 the official figures showed the following enrollment:[21]

[162]

387 elementary rural schools	with	21,960 pupils
206 elementary urban schools		13,881
105 presbyterial schools		4,836
49 mixed private schools		825
29 Catholic girls' schools		5,141
8 Catholic boys' schools		2,576
10 mixed popular schools		1,009
2 girls' professional schools		133
1 manual training school		555
60 national high schools		2,012
Private elementary schools		5,481
Private high schools		2,904
Total		61,313 pupils

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[18] See Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

[19] Dantès Bellegarde, *Pour une Haïti heureuse* (Port-au-Prince, 1929), pp. 100 ff.

[20] Dantès Bellegarde, *Un Haïtien parle*, p. 31.

[21] *Livre bleu d'Haïti*, 1919–20 (Port-au-Prince, 1920), pp. 21–22.

These figures seem moderately impressive by comparison with those 175
of 1875; but a government report of 1931 states[22] that of the 361 rural 87
schools visited by investigators, 89 had no seats for their pupils, and 157 had only from one to three benches; 122 had neither desks nor tables upon which the pupils might work; 341 had no maps. Of the total number of 977 benches found in all the rural schools, 303 were almost unusable, and of the 26 maps in existence, 13 were entirely beyond use. Of the 355 teachers examined, 257 could not read, and 278 could not add, subtract, multiply, or divide. The average monthly salary was 32.07 gourdes, or $6.21. Of the 17,679 pupils enrolled in rural schools, only 4,022 attended. In this same report President Vincent claims to have made a radical reform in all these matters. His rural teachers are trained, many of them at the government agricultural school at Damien; school equipment has been distributed; salaries have been raised to 65 gourdes, or $13.

The American Occupation showed itself keen to assist education, 648
but unintentionally the measures taken by the whites ran afoul of 871
politics to a serious degree. The excellent agricultural experiment
school at Damien was filled with élite students who attended it, in [565]
the opinion of many, chiefly in order to receive the scholarships offered; moreover, the class question was raised and bitterly argued: Should peasant students live and study with the élite, and should the curriculum be the same for both? Finally, education was one of the few matters not specifically included in the treaty between Haiti and the United States as under American direction. The result was unhappy: the Occupation was accused of setting up a rival educational "system" to that of the government. Even Bellegarde, most of whose ideas the Americans were trying to carry out, found himself in opposition, chiefly as a result of methods and political implications involved.

If only the budget of the country could be increased, one feels that 871
the rural educational problem might be dealt with, for more and 565
more people are aware of what education might do for the country. Even so, there are still many élite who betray their fear that with education the masses will desert the land and cease to be subservient.

That the élite, who in fact control the country, should receive a training which would fit them for technical skills is a proposal often

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[22] *"L'Oeuvre d'éducation rurale du gouvernement du Président Vincent"* (Imprimerie de l'État, Port-au-Prince, 1936).

871/ 565 heard among the more thoughtful.[23] The whole country is teeming with opportunities for engineers, doctors, foresters, agronomists, for scientists and specialists of all kinds. Instead of training themselves for such careers the average young men still hanker after the purely honorific career of law, which may lead to governmental posts. A cultured Haitian in 1920 told Dr. Carl Kelsey: "Those of us who have been trained have never been trained to work physically; we do not believe in it; we have no respect for it. We have got to go into the government service; that is the only outlet for any large number of us."[24] And so the average élite boy goes on with his classical training which fits him for nothing but cultured leisure.[25]

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[23] See especially J. Price-Mars, *La Vocation de l'élite* (Port-au-Prince, 1919), pp. 51 ff.

[24] Quoted in Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

[871] [565] [25] In the examinations there is often bribery and other dishonesty, according to credible informants. Some of the élite youths seem to feel that because their fathers hold governmental posts they themselves should be passed, no matter what their showing; and not all teachers have fortitude enough to resist the pressure of important parents, for they fear reprisals in the form of dismissal.

[p. 285]

XVI

PROBLEMS OF THE ÉLITE

TO associate for any length of time with the upper classes of Haitian society is to be aware of a deep unrest, which social charm may cover for the most part, but which inadvertently reveals itself. One discovers a large number of topics which had better not be discussed at all, for they bring a look of distress, wariness, or nervous tension to the face of one's host. To generalize from personal experience is dangerous, if not futile; the present section, therefore, must be read with skepticism. The writer has rarely passed more thoroughly delightful and stimulating hours than in the homes of Haitians. It must not be considered any reflection upon these kindly persons, consequently, if he notes that many of them seemed always to be taking care to guard their faces and their words, lest by look or speech they might be betrayed. What lies behind that guard? What worries the élite? 565

Sensitivity to the opinion of the white world, first of all. The cultured Haitians know that white people generally are inclined to think of all dark-skinned people as Negroes, all originally from Africa, the Dark Continent of superstition, cannibalism, and savagery; they know it to be commonly held that the Negro is mentally inferior to the white, incapable of first-rate achievement in any art or science, always on the verge of a lapse back into barbarism; and they know that in large parts of the white world social lines are firmly held against the Negro. On the other hand, they have been brought up in cultured homes, where stress has always been laid upon things of the intellect. Good manners, correct speech, decorum, social *savoir-faire*—all these and other ingredients of gentle living the élite children have known since infancy, in their homes and in their social circle. It is expected that a person will know what is going on in Paris, will have read the new novels, will be able to talk about philosophical tendencies and intellectual currents. 565 829

In other words, the élite man knows that he is a cultured gentleman in the truest sense. For years he has seen tourist ships landing hundreds of Americans each week at Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haïtien; he has seen the mad revelry of some of these whites, their

565 ill-mannered vulgarity, their superficiality of mind, their poor taste. 829 He knows well enough that it is not fair to judge a whole nation by a few representatives, yet it is clear to him that these raucous whites regard themselves, and are by others regarded, as lords of creation who need never worry about social acceptance. The Haitian knows himself the superior of most of these white people, whether the test be intellectual or on the basis of gentility. Nevertheless, the white inferior is preferred by all the world to his Haitian superior. The white American can go anywhere and, with his carefree self-assurance, see all doors open to him; the cultured Haitian can go few places away from home, and in even those few many doors are yet closed in his face.

Whether the result of his reflections, which must be provoked anew each time the tourist invasion begins, leads him to bitterness or to cynical acceptance depends upon his temperament. It would be almost impossible not to envy the assurance of the white man. And what must life be like when the thought of one's birth, over which one had no control, forever rises as a spectre to haunt one's daily awareness?

Distress of mind may lead the élite in public to impassioned defense of Haitian achievement, but in private he will be all the while imitating the white man and accepting his judgments. The word "ambivalence" is descriptive of his attitude: he wishes to go both ways, to justify Haiti, yet to be regarded as white. Haitian tradition pulls him in one direction, white superiorities the other. There is probably not a single member of the élite who does not feel as if half life's burdens would disappear if only one were white. The darker complexion is one of those hard facts which simply cannot be got around. But one's children can be lighter, and one's grandchildren lighter still, if one marries wisely.

565 55 This is a hope of the future. Meantime there is a pattern of behavior for the present. What has made the white man master of the Western World seems to have been a combination of money, political power, intellectual attainment, and social domination of inferiors. After these, therefore, the proper youth must strive indefatigably. Since these aims are common to the élite they are hardly mentioned; indeed, one wonders sometimes whether even the people themselves are aware of the foundations of their ambition.

No élite man in Haiti ever made money by working with his

hands. In colonial times fortunes came to plantation owners, and 565
since then have come only to political officeholders. With money 55
one can go to France where he will be accepted as a human being, not turned aside as a Negro; with money one can get an education, live a life of leisure, acquire luxuries. Hence the popularity of law as a profession, for it is the career by which one enters politics. That a president should begin life as an impecunious barrister and end it as a well-to-do landlord, the owner of several villas and motorcars, seems praiseworthy, natural, logical. The American success story is "from log cabin to White House," but with no implication of monetary gain from such progress; the Haitian success story is rather "from penury to plutocracy."

It is not enough, however, to aim high in the material sphere. In 565
proportion to their numbers the élite are extraordinarily ambitious 521
for intellectual achievement. A distinction is sometimes made between the social élite and the intellectual élite, the former being decidedly more numerous.[1] Conversation in a Haitian drawing room is likely to be on about the same intellectual plane as in America except in specifically literary and artistic circles. Poetry, philosophy, literary trends, historical speculation are staples of discussion in more than a few homes. A recent president wrote many metaphysical poems. An American author, attending a social function consisting chiefly of secretaries of state, was amazed to find the group absorbed in a dispute about poetry.[2]

Aristocrats have always kept the lower orders at a distance socially. 565 829
In Haiti this rule is observed with rigor. To suggest that a possible reason for such harshness of attitude and behavior toward servants and working people might be fear lest white visitors should class all persons of color together would be unkind, though not unsound. In general, there is a deep conviction that the masses are stupid. Although persons of culture exist who are generally solicitous for the betterment of their life, there is really no comparison which will make clear to the white reader the ordinary attitude of mind of

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[1] This distinction is clearly made in John Lobb, "Caste and Class in Haiti," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLVI, No. 1 (July, 1940), p. 30 ff.

[2] W. B. Seabrook, *The Magic Island*, p. 161. "On my way home from the palace," concludes the author, "I reflected how queer it would seem for a group of cabinet ministers and Treasury officials at the White House to be earnestly discussing the poetry of an American anthology which included metaphysical love-lyrics by Calvin Coolidge."

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élite toward *les noirs*. The mildest expression of general opinion is that it would be a waste of time to try to educate the masses, for they are so nearly like animals that they could not absorb even the simplest education. Peasants eat when they are hungry, rise and go to sleep with light and darkness, are unable to count, like animals sense changes in weather; peasants are kindly but stupid, like donkeys: this is the kind of summary one hears from the mouths of the élite. It is possible that the élite are merely imitating the attitude toward the Negro of many white people they have seen.

[466] Treatment of servants is revealing. They are often reviled for their thickheadedness. When one remonstrates with an employer for his frequent upbraiding of workmen, there is sure to be a look of pained surprise. Said one man: "You can no more hurt the feelings of a peasant than you can hurt the feelings of a mule." Servants simply do not feel as human beings do, but must be "broken," like a horse. This is not to say that many kindly employers do not exist, but rather that working people are not regarded as belonging to the higher orders of nature. A Catholic priest who devoted a good part of his time to work in the hills was told by some of his élite parishioners that this was a waste of time, for such dull people could not possibly benefit from his teachings.

Thoughtful men, on the other hand, know well enough that it is possible to improve the lot of the people. But if the peasant should be well educated he would become ambitious; where then would be the monopoly which is now held by the aristocrats on wealth, government, education? Merest self-interest prompts one to defend the status quo. This definitely worries many of the upper group. Aware that so long as conditions remain as they are Haiti will be poor and backward, they are nevertheless not ready to promote what would be a thoroughgoing social revolution. If any government should become oversolicitous for the well-being of the masses, it would soon find itself bitterly opposed by the upper class. In the long run, what will be the result of keeping things as they are? Élite who know their history can find several possible answers, no one of which appeals to them: a peasants' revolt, a Reign of Terror, intervention by a foreign power. They are on the horns of a dilemma: if as rulers they promote material welfare, they lose their present positions of security; if they do not promote a change, violent change will unseat them.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

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Probably no white man will ever succeed in fathoming the heartache of a sensitive individual of a people not highly regarded. To be born white gives one, as matters stand at present, a head-start in the world; to be a citizen of a world power means security upon which one can depend. The Haitian wants to be accepted in the outside world, but his skin color puts up one high barrier against him, and his citizenship in Haiti is no great recommendation to special consideration. The intellectual man comes to feel that he exists almost in a vacuum. Haiti is in the Western Hemisphere, yet is the only independent country in that hemisphere which has French as its official language and France as its cultural mother. Whereas the intellectual of the United States feels a common bond with the whole English-speaking world, and the intellectual of Spanish America speaks the language of seventeen neighboring states, the Haitian savant is not often honored in France nor yet by learned compeers in the Western Hemisphere. The more he looks to France as the centre of the cultural world, the greater will be his isolation in Latin America.

XVII

OUTER ASPECTS OF HAITI

10-0 [538] HAITIAN poets rarely sing the beauty of their native land, nor do the travelers who roam the earth dwell long upon this particular pearl of the Antilles. Mountains slope down into the sea, sunlight sparkles upon the foaming waves as they roll in, peninsulas and bays lend variety to the coast line: yet the majestic display does not make the visitor cherish Haiti in his mind and heart alongside Sicily or Scotland or Maine or Japan. Columbus in 1492 thought the island "enchanting," saying that "it is a wonder. Its mountains and plains, and meadows and fields, are so beautiful and rich for planting and sowing, and rearing cattle of all kinds, and for building towns and villages" that it "surpasses anything that would be believed by one who had not seen it."[1] The Spanish admiral viewed his discoveries with the eye of faith, seeing the glories which might come to be; his enthusiasm was matched by other early Spaniards. The French in the eighteenth century likewise thought the land beautiful, and with skillful management made their human habitations an ornament to generous nature.

13 105 If one could view Haiti only from the sea or from the air, he would probably, like the Spaniards and Frenchmen, speak in rhapsodies, for the land still stands up out of the sea—"the highest peak of that submerged mountain range whose summits appear as the islands of the Greater Antilles."[2] Visitors disembark from their ships or planes, however, see the poverty, the backwardness, the pathetic smallness of human effort which matches so ill with what nature originally provided, and come away with a feeling of disappointment. Not even the little things of Haiti are immediately attractive: the peasants are not "quaint," their costumes are not "picturesque," their towns are not "colorful"; even the souvenirs to take back to the tourist ship have likely as not been made in New York and imported by the local shops. Outsiders, distracted by the human element, hardly glance at the scenery; and since as conducted tourists they are not likely to penetrate far beyond the seacoast, or stay long enough

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[1] Christopher Columbus, *Select Letters*, R. H. Major, ed. (London, 1870), p. 5.
[2] Blair Niles, *Black Haiti*, p. 6.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

105 to regard the people as neighbors, their first impression is generally
13 their abiding one.

And yet the land has its memorable beauties. To lie at anchor in
13 the harbor at Port-au-Prince early in the morning and watch the
long arm of the southern peninsula turn gradually from purple
vagueness to brilliant green as the sun rises back of the capital; to see
a tiny ship with its patched and colored sail glide quietly by on its
way out to the island of La Gonâve, lying twenty miles to the west,
like a morsel about to be swallowed by the open jaws of the "mainland";
to hear the morning noises drifting across the water, with a
snatch of song or laughter in the air; to watch Port-au-Prince come
to life, white and sparkling as the sun strikes it—this is the proper
introduction to Haiti [illegible]nd the capital are the hills and mountains;
if one will take the time, he may look back as he climbs and see not
only the whiteness of the city, but the gracious sweep of the harbor,
and the peninsula losing itself in the western distance. He will think
without apology of a lesser Naples, and will not miss Vesuvius.
Within the country is every variety of scenery: high mountains
whose peaks are frequently shrouded in misty clouds; ranges of
lower mountains ("*morne*" is the eloquent Haitian name for them)
which can be melancholy, kindly, or forbidding, as the spirit of the
traveler wills; dull wastes of salt marshes; arid deserts where cactus
grows, spiked and hairy, to enormous heights; canyons, waterfalls,
dried-up streams; moors, little jungles, farms; rich plantations of
sugar cane, dusty stretches of sheer barrenness—everything, in fact,
from majesty to complete insipidity. Rarely can one find such utter
diversity in a small space as in Haiti. One might fancy himself successively
on Egdon Heath, in an Arizona desert, among the Dakota
Bad Lands, in old Saint-Domingue, in tropical Africa, in the Pyrenees.

361 The sad truth remains: nothing that man has done in Haiti for a
[342] century and a quarter has been worthy of the landscape. A few government
buildings in Port-au-Prince are passable, and the city as a
whole is not a blemish; yet not to have seen it is to have missed no
great aesthetic experience. Elsewhere the towns and villages run the
gamut from monotonous small-scale structures to mere collections
311 of shanties. Great gashes have been cut in the forests by generations
of earth-hungry peasants who needed farms. Much of the land looks
poor; indeed, thousands of once fertile acres are now beyond any
use at all, grown up in cactus, because of overuse and misuse for-

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SV3 Haiti SV3

311 merly. Wherever the overcrowded Haitians have lived since 1815,
there beauty has had to give way to gnawing necessity which lacked
either the imagination or the means to be sightly.

105 One can stand upon a morne and watch a rain storm rush down
the valley, bending the palm trees in its fury, and think Haiti still a
magnificent sight. Then one must descend the mountainside past
rickety shacks and rocky fields, and the feeling grows that not all the
kindly simplicity of the people is enough to lift the country from its
[134] dilapidation. As he nears the village, the afternoon scent of roasting
coffee will delight him; but then he sees the squalor of village life
and is reminded that three million souls are here trying to eke out an
existence upon a small area of declining fertility.

Much in Haiti is picturesque if one can keep his mind from wandering
to the conditions which lie behind the picturesqueness.
[482] Women stride down from the hills with great loads on their heads;
aged crones, pipe in mouth, sit perched on the haunches of tiny
[443] donkeys with their bulging panniers; the great market square in the
[492] town is a scene of noisy confusion with hundreds of women and
[482] children, a mixture of smells, thousands of little piles of soap, candy,
gewgaws, vegetables, gaping chickens tied together by the feet,
[434] shirts, canes, bolts of cloth. All the weary women, however, must
trudge back up to their shanties on the mountainside when the
[146] market is over. Many of them do not see ten dollars in cash during
the year, and their little children, with bellies bulging, give evidence
[164] of undernourishment. Without doctors, without even the rudiments
of hygiene, they manage somehow to subsist, or else die, frequently
of disease which might easily have been prevented.

565 In Port-au-Prince and a few other towns live enough members of
the élite to make one momentarily forget the plight of the masses.
[342] The houses of the well-to-do are substantially built, if not often
[351] attractive. Their garden walls are brilliant with bougainvillea, their
walks with hibiscus. Tiny red lizards (analis) make flashes of color
along the walls. On shady verandas and in the parlors one hears
delightful conversation, eats excellent food, savors the pleasures of
[575] civilization. The clubs of the élite are pleasing, their tennis is good,
[526] their dancing graceful. To be among these families as a welcome
guest is an experience in gracious hospitality which can never be
[535] forgotten. Too soon, however, one must leave these havens of
urbanity and pass through districts of the town which haunt the
mind with their grim want.

There are sections, particularly in the capital, in which shanties 362
more resembling chicken coops than dwellings house whole families
under leaky roofs of crude thatch. Privacy, cleanliness, sanitation,
are not to be thought of. That the sun is warm in Haiti is a blessing,
for cold would creep through the gaping walls. Where the shanty
dwellers go in the rain, where they get their food, what relieves the
dreary round of daily monotony the important people of Haiti do
not know, nor do many of them seem to care. President Vincent
undertook to clear away a section of the most abject slums in Port-au-Prince,
erected in their place a series of two-room (likewise
two-family) houses about a central square. Compared with the
hovels they replaced the new houses are palatial; compared with
houses Americans would consider adequate, they look more like
unimaginative garages. With what rapidity an epidemic of serious
nature might sweep the lower sections of the city, which are but one
vast slum, is a thought too harrowing to entertain.

In the whole city there are hardly half a dozen buildings which 344
would detain the lover of architecture. The president's palace is a 644
gleaming white structure, somewhat resembling the White House in
Washington. With its background of lofty mountains it makes an
impressive picture, although it stands naked in the vast public square
of the city. Young palm trees are now growing in the square, and
may before many years provide for the palace the setting it deserves. 344
Inside the palace one's chief impression is of emptiness. Other government
buildings range from plain white edifices which fulfill their
practical function without any suggestion of aesthetic graciousness,
down through the inferior grades to wooden structures which one 346
passes without a second glance. The cathedral, placed upon an
eminence, is unattractive both in its exterior and in the glaring
interior. Upon one of its finger towers at night gleams a light to [349]
guide ships into the harbor. The clubs and a few of the villas are
pleasant to look at; the colleges of the lay brothers are impressively
large, but bespeak the provincial town.

Indeed, one wanders up and down the country in search of man-made 712
beauty and finds only two examples, both partially ruined, and 344
both in the North: Christophe's magnificent citadel, La Ferrière, and
the shattered shell of his charming palace, Sans Souci.

The citadel is breath-taking. Astride a great peak the huge edifice 712
resembles the mighty beak of a ship about to soar off into the
atmosphere. Inside one can wander through endless vaults, gaze from

712 the battlements far off across the tortuous mass of mountains and
[713] green valleys, admire the sheer strength of will which made His Majesty's subjects bear four hundred cannon up the steep and rocky path—not to mention thousands of cannon balls now rusting away after a century of disuse, or the powder and shot which once filled
[173] the magazines. It is said that five thousand soldiers could be housed in the fortress at once. If this is hyperbole, one hardly dare challenge
[703] it, for the whole Citadel belittles the individual man. It is likewise said that Christophe once made a battalion of soldiers march off the cliff to their death merely to demonstrate his absolute control over
[766] them. Such stories grow up around His Black Majesty. He lies entombed in his useless but still superb fortress—and lives in the memory of the Northerners, one of whom said proudly: "We of the North have a great heritage, and you will find that we are all dominated by *une psychologie citadelienne.*"

Dungeons, secret passages, royal apartments, separate rooms for each of the old Dutch, Spanish, French, and English cannon, some of them dating back to the seventeenth century—all the paraphernalia of the storybook fortress is present. From a bastion one gazes, as from an alp, for miles in any direction, and feels that La Ferrière is certainly one of the most impressive, and one of the most futile, edifices in the world. If the silent cannon had ever been fired, their balls would have rumbled harmlessly down the mountainside. The suspicion grows that Christophe achieved his architectural miracle not primarily as a defense against the French, but to make his subjects proud of what a nation of despised ex-slaves could accomplish.

344 Five miles away, at the foot of the mountain, is the village of
644 Milot, with the ruins of the palace of Sans Souci. Of yellow stone, it spreads out spaciously like a French château. Its rooms must have been magnificent. The palace is so situated that one may look out across the northern plains to the sea, or up the valleys to mountain peaks. In Sans Souci Christophe shot himself in 1820 when he knew that only *souci* would remain to him if he lived.

489 Transportation from one part of the country to another is far from easy. There are no railroads—unless one counts the short line running
[496] north a few miles from Port-au-Prince to nowhere in particular, and the equally short line coming west into Cap-Haïtien from the fields
[491] of the northern plain. Roads built by the American Marines make automobile travel between the main towns possible, if one does not

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SV3 Haiti SV3

489 mind dust, ruts, and a steady succession of bumps. To travel in the
[49] average hired car, driven by a Haitian, is one of the grim experiences
of life. The driver speeds as if pursued by a demon, while the peasant
pedestrians leap for safety into the ditches; the unfortunate passenger
is moved to close his eyes to avoid seeing the inevitable crash which
[361] does not come. The most comfortable means of travel if one is going
only to towns is by ship, for practically all of Haiti's towns are
seaports.

162 To know the towns is still not to know Haiti, however, for two
577 million or more Haitians live in the rural regions. These are the
people. And if they are ignorant and not too clean, they are nevertheless
models of kindly generosity. It is the proud boast even of the
élite that one may travel the length and breadth of the land in perfect
safety, in no danger of life or of personal property.

105 Many homely sights linger in the mind: women washing the family clothes in the stream, laughing and gossiping with their neighbors; men and women talking in animated fashion to themselves, arguing, cajoling, explaining as they walk along; individuals carrying a single flower, simply because it is beautiful; barefoot women, gnarled of hand and lined of face, kneeling in the Catholic church at prayer; taxi drivers who cruise by, hissing in order to attract the attention of a visitor who obviously can afford to ride instead of walk; an apparently ceaseless procession of patient donkeys, always laden, sometimes ridden by women, sometimes urged along from behind; the so-called buses each with its witty or its florid name (Plaisance, Éclair, Grâce-à-Dieu, Polichinelle, Sauve-qui-peut, Montparnasse), which like glorified buckboards jostle woodenly from the town to country hamlets; the winsome, open smile and gay laughter of a peasant boy; the ingratiating charm of a sleeping baby in the noise of the market place. To know the average Haitian is to feel a warm affection for him. His life is never easy, yet he bears it all with true beauty of spirit. If *le bon Dieu* sends distress, he will also make it possible for distress to be borne.

576 The people are polite, whether to each other or to strangers. A
younger person greets an older one as *compère* or *commère*—literally,
godfather or godmother; to his equal he says "*frère*" or "*m'sieu.*"
[967] Sometimes one sees a local patriarch instructing little children in
[609] "deportment." This courtesy extends to hospitality: a stranger is
almost sure to be offered shelter and food wherever he stops.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

527 On Saturday nights one hears the drums beating all over the
[534] country, but if one follows the sound he is more than likely to end
up at nothing more esoteric than a neighborhood dance. Other
[535] musical instruments than drums are rare, but any community has
drums; and these set a rhythm to which one can dance. Generally
food is available at these affairs, as well as drinks both hard and soft.
273 It is not extraordinary to discover that a few of the men have drunk
rather freely of clairin, the raw rum of the country; most drunkenness seems to lead to good-natured ribaldry rather than to offensive
violence. It is unusual for a drunken man to cause damage of any
535 serious nature. The dancing corresponds neither to American ballroom dancing nor to set folk dancing. Most of it is done solo, and an
533 individual participates or remains on the outskirts of the enclosure as
the mood of the moment impels him. Over the beat of the drum can
be heard one of the current songs, more than likely a bit smutty in
nature, and frequently poking fun at some well-known personage, or
making allusions which in normal speech might seem crude.

541 One of the popular Sunday afternoon sports is the *gaguère*, or cock-
[525] fight, held under a shelter back of a home. Much small betting goes
on. The spectators sit or stoop close around the dusty ring, talking
to the cock they are backing, commenting on the fight, offering
advice to the owner. Between rounds the cocks are rubbed down,
sprayed with water or rum, fondled and excited anew. Toward the
latter stages of any fight the spectacle becomes gory and, to the
uninitiated, distinctly cruel.

526 There is singularly little sport in Haiti. Élite youths play tennis;
boys enjoy football; and swimming is a common diversion. Few
sports are competitive and, so far as the writer has observed, the peasants have in their games practically nothing resembling organization.

[p 297]

XVIII

THE CRÉOLE LANGUAGE

JUST as Haiti is a country of two distinct social strata, so it 197
possesses two distinct languages, French and Créole. Only the 191
élite speak French, but everyone in the country, from the president to the humblest dullard, speaks Créole. Aristocrats call the latter language disparagingly a *patois*. But is it? When does a patois or a dialect become a true language? When it has definite rules of grammar, declension, rhetoric? Créole has them all, even though the users are unaware of the rules. When it acquires the dignity of a literature? Increasingly the most original Haitian authors write their novels and poems in Créole or with large passages in that tongue—and did English suddenly cease to be a patois and become a language only when Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* appeared? When it is the language of passion, of sorrow, of delicate nuance? Here more than anywhere Créole meets the requirements, as any honest Haitian would confess by his lapse into Créole at moments of emotion. When it gains wide concurrence? No Haitian is ignorant of Créole.

Two centuries have witnessed the birth of this new tongue, but 197
because it has been the speech of the lower orders this has not been accounted a noteworthy phenomenon, has not been praised as a philological achievement, has only recently been studied by linguists. Most people have been content to regard it as a debasement of French—and poor French at that. Yet were not Italian and French likewise debasements of Latin by the common folk, and English even more of a debasement and a hodgepodge? In 1700 Créole existed only in germ; by 1800 it was already formed—a kind of social cement which held together all that diffuse humanity which was shortly to become an independent nation.

Créole is not, as most people (even cultured Haitians) assume, the degeneration of French which occurred when benighted African slaves tried to learn and speak a new language. On the contrary, it was already a language when the slaves were brought into Saint-Domingue. They learned it quickly, and in the course of two hundred years they and their descendants, who have known no other tongue, have modified it only as any people slowly transform

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SV3 Haiti SV3

197 a language into their daily speech. What the Americans have done to English, the Haitians in general have done to Créole. It is pertinent briefly to review the early history of Créole in order to comprehend the distinctly Haitian contributions to the language.

175 579 Through most of the seventeenth century Caribbean waters were full of pirates and buccaneers preying upon Spanish shipping. The effective monopoly which lordly Spain held in the preceding century over the trade of Europe with her rich Mexican and South American colonies began, in the early years of the new century, to crumble before the ingenious, speedy, and daring assaults of non-Spanish raiders. French, Dutch, and English sailors were all ready to try their hand at capturing laden Spanish ships. The rich cargoes of gold, silver, and merchandise were alluring enough to make the risk seem worth taking. And indeed the risk was not too great, for Spain's stately galleons were antiquated and cumbersome, generally no match for the flyboats[1] which had speed and much greater manageability. More and more Spanish control over the Caribbean, the Spanish Main, declined as the freebooters increased.

175 579 648 French sailors were among the most numerous and reckless of the gadflies who made life miserable for the Spanish traders. Drawn from the northern and northwestern provinces of France, these men had been seafarers all their lives. Harrying Spanish shipping was the most lucrative career for French sailors, and as the seventeenth century wore on their numbers in the Caribbean increased. By 1660 they had established a raiding base on La Tortue, an island off the northern coast of Haiti, where they developed a characteristic way of life—economic, political, and social—between raids.[2] Their presence near Haiti gave France a claim, in the Treaty of Ryswick (1697), to the western part of the island. For the next hundred years this region was to be known as Saint-Domingue.

175 579 197 Créole was born of buccaneering. In the seventeenth century the French of Île-de-France had not yet supplanted the dialects of the French districts; the buccaneers consequently spoke their native speech, and since Norman sailors far outnumbered the others

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[175] [1] Origin of "flibustier," "filibuster," and "freebooter."

[192] [2] It was here that they came to be called "buccaneers." They raided the relatively deserted main island of Haiti (then still under Spanish control) for cattle roaming wild. These cattle they cooked over an open fire, with a certain kind of wood; the process was called "boucanning," and they themselves "boucaniers." They imported wives from the seaport towns of Normandy, and families began to be raised on La Tortue.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175

Norman French became the dominant tongue of the French buccaneers. 579 Words were naturally added from the patois of the neighboring 197 French provinces of Picardy, Brittany, and Anjou, but Norman remained the matrix.[3] With La Tortue as their home base, the buccaneers roamed the Caribbean, coming into constant contact with other people—contact which left its mark, as meetings generally do, upon the speech of the travelers.

There were still Indians left in some of the islands, and Indians 175 outnumbered Spaniards on the mainland. From these aborigines 197 Créole borrowed many individual words, these being generally the 192 names of things—flora and fauna, food, objects of daily life more or 193 less common throughout the Caribbean world.[4] The grammatical contributions of the Indians were apparently only an emphasis upon tendencies already present in Norman French, such as that of keeping the verb form constant while making other words in the sentence do the work of indicating past, present, or future, continuous or completed action, and the like.

Engaged in buccaneering with the French were hundreds of 175 English privateers. Often English and French raided in partnership; 197 for many years both groups shared La Tortue. This contact left a 192 heavy mark upon Créole—a congenial one, indeed, for Norman French had been for more than four centuries the official language of England. Now in the seventeenth century English was giving back to Norman many words in exchange for the ones it had taken.[5] More important than its verbal gift, however, was the influence it exerted toward a simple syntax. As compared with French forms,

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[3] An outstanding linguist, Jules Faine, in *Philologie créole*, p. 1, estimates that three out of four words in Créole are Norman. 175

[4] A very few of these Indian words have become familiar in French, and still fewer 192 in English; but one finds most of them, in one form or another, in the whole Caribbean basin. Examples are:

agouti, a small rodent
atoutou, a dish whose base is corn
caïman, alligator
iguane, a large lizard
avocat, the avocado pear
calebasse, calabash
corossol, a green prickly fruit
goyave, guava
igname, yam

hamac, hammock
ouragan, hurricane
bayahonde, a very hard wood
campêche, another hard wood
mabouya, small lizard
barbaco, barbecue
cassave, a starch plant
lambi, a mollusk or conch
tom-tom, a purée of bananas

[5] Henry Moisy, *Glossaire comparatif Anglo-Normand* (Caen, 1888), points out that the modern Norman dialect contains more than 5,000 words common to English and Norman, but not recognized in official French.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 Norman ones were less complicated; English, simpler still, reënforced
192 the Norman tendency.

197 From the Spaniards of the Caribbean region Créole borrowed not only nouns (generally the most assimilable of words), but a large number of adjectives, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and certain subtler characteristics of speech.

This amalgam, then, three quarters Norman French, was the
Créole language as of 1697 when France acquired Saint-Domingue,
when buccaneering became unprofitable, and many of the filibusters
settled down to begin a respectable life as plantation owners in the
567 new colony. African slaves were soon imported to satisfy the demand
197 for labor. First a few, then thousands a year and increasing thousands,
were brought to Saint-Domingue. In all externalities, of which
192 language is one, slaves must yield up their old ways and take on new.
175 The question of interest here is to what extent the Negroes influenced
Créole, giving it an "African" character.

The answer, surprising at first, is that the Negro influence was almost negligible.

In the first place, Créole was now already a language with a rich
175 vocabulary, all the grammatical equipment, and the necessary regu-
177 larities. The slaves came to the colony from all parts of Africa, and
197 so with widely differing languages. Linguistic maps of Africa indi-
cate the presence of hundreds of dialects up and down the west coast;
tribes living fifteen miles apart spoke languages which, although
belonging to the same stock, were as different as Spanish and Italian
[191] from each other. Owing to the habit of dispersing the slaves, the
average Negro had no common basis of understanding with his
fellow slaves on the same plantation. Practically all white foremen
and overseers gave orders in Créole; this within one generation
became the *lingua franca* of the plantations, an economic necessity,
and socially indispensable.

In the second place, there was in Saint-Domingue no equivalent to the familiar objects of life in Africa. Trees, houses, earth there were, of course, but different kinds of trees, houses, and soil. Economic tasks were performed in a different manner with new techniques and organization. Every outward form of life was foreign to the African background. Even assuming that there had been a common Negro speech, it would have found little to attach itself to in the New World. It should be noted that Negroes likewise made few contribu-

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175

tions to the English language in the southern United States, where 177
they were slaves for seventy years longer than in Haiti. 197

Common African economic ways yielded to the plantation system
and slavery; the Negroes had no opportunity to govern themselves 175
or settle their own disputes; they mated rather than married; their 567
families might be broken up if the master wished to sell a slave. The one part of life in which they were permitted to follow unhindered their African ways was the intimate one of religion which, since it needed no buildings or organization, did not interfere with work, and could be entirely personal and private, was not suppressed. As has been pointed out, the Dahomean form of religion prevailed over all others and, modified, gained wide adherence among the slaves. It is precisely in Vodun that Créole has taken over its only important African words, such as Vodun, zombi, houngan, marassa, loa, houmfort, bocor, ouanga.

It would be erroneous to imply that the Negroes had no effect 175
upon the language of which they soon became the predominant 197
users.[6] Their operations were of a subtle sort, however. As with the 194
Negroes of the United States, the letter "r" proved difficult, and often disappeared altogether, leaving many words softly slurred. "Marcher," for example, generally sounds as if it were *ma'ché*. Likewise in the course of years they gave the language their own accent, their own modulation and tone, which make Créole sound different on their lips from a white man's way of speaking it. Some scholars attribute this to a *racial* influence—that is, to the morphology of the Negro throat and tongue. It might be pointed out to the contrary that Americans, white like the English, have given the mother tongue *their* own accent, modulation, and tone. It has certainly not yet been proved that race has anything to do with speech.

Words in imitation of a sound grow up in every language. Several 175
western African dialects, especially Mandingue, seemed fond of
onomatopoeia; in Haiti, consequently, one hears many an expressive 192
additional word. Moreau de Saint-Méry[7] noticed this in colonial Saint-Domingue, citing such cases as the addition of "*bap*" to the verb "*tomber,*" if one had fallen down lightly, or "*boum*" if heavily;

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[6] Suzanne Sylvain, *Le Créole haïtien* (Wetteren, Belgium, 1936), p. 10, says that although the African contribution to Haitian Créole is generally considered to be slight, she has personally found 170 words of undeniable African origin, and feels sure that there are many more. [174]

[7] *Description . . . de . . . Saint-Domingue*, II, 36–37.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

175 192 if a blow were given on the face the word "*pimme*" was added to the verb describing that blow, but if a stick had been used, "*bimme*" was added, and if a whip, then "*v'lap v'lap.*"

175 193 One of the Negro contributions which gives a delightful charm to the language is the principle of doubling, whether the word is adjective, adverb, verb, or pronoun. Faine cites the following examples:

ioun bel, bel femme—an extraordinarily beautiful woman.
li té bien, bien malade—he was very gravely ill.
li marcher, l'marcher, l'marcher—he kept on walking and walking.
li-minme, li-minme—it is really he himself.[8]

175 538 Still another and very important Negro contribution is the wealth of proverbs. A person may say practically anything he chooses in proverbs, particularly if he uses to its fullest the significant tones of which his voice is capable. As many as 1,500 of these proverbs have been collected, and there is reason to believe that as many more could be found.[9] In general they say the same things proverbs say in any language:

Fer couper fer. Il faut du fer pour couper le fer; which is to signify, "Great needs demand great remedies."

Tit cochon tit sang. Un petit cochon a peu de sang; that is, "From each according to his means."

Sel pas besoin vanter tête li. Le sel n'a pas besoin de se vanter; or, "Real merit never needs to boast."

Since some of the proverbs make allusions to elephants and tigers, animals not found in the Caribbean region, it is clear that these at least, and maybe others, go far back in the wisdom of the folk.

538 Storytelling is a well-cultivated art in Haiti. The folklore of Créole is rich, some of it bearing close resemblance to the Negro tales current in the southern United States, particularly the Br'er Rabbit tales. When a group gathers and a story is about to begin, the teller says, "Cric?"—as if to say, "Shall I tell you a story?" or, "Are you ready?" To this his listeners reply, "Crac!"—or, "Please do! Certainly!" or, "We are listening." The two words together make a sort of rapport between raconteur and audience, an overture, "Once upon a time."

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[8] Faine, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[9] J. J. Audain, *Proverbes* (Port-au-Prince, 1877), cites 1,011 Haitian proverbs in Créole, and E. Chenet, *Proverbes créoles* (Port-au-Prince, 1896), records 1,456 proverbs.

Only a beginning has been made of collecting the thousands of 538 "Cric? Crac!" stories current in Haiti.

It is only recently that people have written Créole, so that there is 212 no standard orthography. Every writer spells words phonetically, with consequent irregularities, and with wide differences between two people writing the same thing. Recent etymological studies may lead eventually to a dictionary and a standard spelling. In order 539 that the reader may see the resemblance of Créole to French, yet its differences from that language, we shall quote a part of one of La Fontaine's fables put into Créole verse by Georges Sylvain.[10] His own French retranslation accompanies the fable, turning such phrases as "female pig" into "sow."

Nan temps toutt bett té palé,	*Au temps où toutes les bêtes parlaient,*
Té g'ain (palant pa respé)	*Il y avait (sauf votre respect)*
Té g'ain gnou fémel cochon.	*Il y avait une truie.*
Zott connin gen cochon bon?	*Vous savez comme les truies sont bonnes gens?*
Cila-là té fait zanmi	*Celle-ci avait fait amitié*
Avec gnou fémel chien, qui	*Avec une chienne, qui*
Té prett pou mi bas. Chien-là,	*Était sur le point de mettre bas. La chienne*
Gnou jou, dit cochon con ça:	*Un jour, dit à la truie:*
"Moin pré pou moin accouché,	*"Me voilà près d'accoucher,*
"Ma conmé, t'en pri! souplé,	*"Ma commère, je vous en prie, s'il vous plaît,*
"Pémett moin prété gnou coin	*"Permettez-moi d'emprunter un coin*
"Nan pac ou, pou pititt moin."	*"De votre parc, pour mes enfants."*[11]

The terseness of the language is fascinating, a situation is hit off 538 precisely in a few words: a stuffed shirt has been deflated, and the 196 truth has been told. A Haitian was heard to say, "Nègue riche li mulatte; mulatte pauvre li nègue"—a rich Negro is accounted a mulatto; a poor mulatto is to all intents and purposes no better than a Negro. And there is a profound comment on the whole caste system.

Wherever the French went in the Caribbean region the Créole 175 language spread—in Louisiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana. 197 Each region has its own peculiarities, but in general it may be said that these other regions show much more French (as distinct from [171] Norman) influence on Créole, and much less Spanish and English influence. Similarly in Haitian towns, where the élite speak French

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[10] *Cric? Crac! Fables de La Fontaine racontées par un montagnard haïtien et transcrites en vers créoles* (Port-au-Prince, 1929), p. 21.

[11] "*Zott*" means "*vous autres*"; "*gnou*" is "*une.*"

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Similarly in Haitian towns, where the élite speak French

197 and where French is taught in the schools, the Créole is less "pure"
191 than in the untutored countryside. Even there the language is chang-
193 ing, for there is steadily operating that "law of simplification" which reduces the complications of language when it has only an oral tradition.[12] Abridgment occurs more and more frequently, agglutination is more apparent, and words tend toward the monosyllabic.

191 Everyone in Haiti speaks and understands Créole. Nursemaids
197 teach it to their élite charges, so that children know it from infancy; élite lovers lapse into its expressive phrases in order to say something particularly intimate which might sound sentimental in French; priests must use it in their parish work if they are to be understood at all. Even the élite presidents have found it wise to speak often to the countrypeople in their own tongue. The gendarmes would be helpless in their police work without it, as would the agricultural, health, and other governmental services. It is the language in which all the small business of Haiti is conducted.[13] Ernest Douyon has written brilliantly and revealingly about it:

> If, on the one hand, we have a business language, an official tongue, which is French, our true maternal language, on the other hand, that one which we first lisp, that of the country as a whole (I had almost said "of the true country," for such is the case), that of the city people as well as of countryfolk, that of all families whatever their differences in education, the language one hears not only in humble huts but in luxurious villas, not only in offices or among the masses but also in private apartments and salons, that which for the crudest as for the most finely cultivated minds (even when these latter through snobbery try to deny the fact) is at all times the most naturally expressive, that which perfectly translates our deepest sentiments (jubilation, anger, love, or whatever) precisely when these are most strongly felt, that which all of us, all (with the rarest exceptions) use spontaneously—is Créole! I know that it is not considered proper in polite society, that it sometimes lends a certain impression of vulgarity, that it is not the correct language for distinguished people—when they are in public! But who is the man of propriety, who the society woman, who in private does not continually use Créole?[14]

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[12] See P. Crouzet, *Les Ponts romains* (Toulouse, 1929), p. 18.

[796] [793] [13] It must be noted that in the Vodun service the houngan sometimes speaks in *langage*, which is not Créole. It purports to be pure African, but is more likely to be mere gibberish.

[14] In his Preface to Faine, *op. cit.*, p. v.

[p. 305]

XIX

SOCIOLOGICAL POSTSCRIPT

ALTHOUGH conceived along sociological lines, this book has made an effort to avoid the use of many technical sociological terms, and to keep discussion on a basis intelligible to the layman. The emphasis has been placed upon the major institutions of Haiti, with such excursions into political history as were necessary to establish sequences; the main objective has constantly been to show what adjustments a group of ex-slaves in a tropical country made to their sudden independence, and to indicate the course of readjustments during the succeeding century or more. 121

It is never given to a people to start with a clean slate. This generation is inevitably, to a large degree, what the preceding generation made it, in habits of mind, in rules of behavior, in ambitions, in taste. The younger generation does not succeed the older, but rather lives along with it, becoming a part of all it has been, unconsciously assimilating traditional rules, attitudes, ways. Yet young people, meeting their own crises, are perpetually restive under the codes of their elders, and are continually exerting pressure to change, or even effecting minor changes. The result is that the mental characteristics we know as "culture" are never stationary. Some cultures change rapidly under the stimulus of crisis and international contacts, while others give the impression of being quiescent because of isolation and lack of outside pressure.

In spite of the fact that mankind never has the opportunity to begin wholly afresh, shaking off the trammels of a miserable past, it nevertheless sometimes happens that the retaining walls which have kept culture within narrow channels may, like the collapse of a dyke, suddenly give way, allowing a flood of rapid changes to occur. Eventually the turbulence will subside, and then one can see, as it were, a relatively placid lake with new landmarks hardly recognizable in terms of what used to exist when the old dykes held. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the end of the dictatorship of Díaz in Mexico are examples.

175 178 This was the situation in Haiti after 1791, and especially after 1804. The boundary walls of a slave economy, carefully built by the French in the eighteenth century and scrupulously guarded by all the whites, were smashed. The constricted limits in which Negro life had moved during slavery now ceased to exist as a channel. For years there was an unceasing effort on the part of Haitian leaders to give a new direction to the life of the blacks, but all those leaders (except Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe) found it more discreet, more congenial, even more logical, to follow the tide rather than to try to stem and direct it.

Between 1791 and 1804, then, the retaining walls of the old economic and political institutions disappeared. The next forty years were ones of experiment in stabilizing a new set of social institutions.[1] Efforts to make the new social structure efficient, orderly, progressive, all failed; by mid-century the undramatic and unconsciously exerted pressure of daily behavior on the part of hundreds of thousands of untutored Negroes gave Haitian institutions their new and recognizable character. The presidents thereafter rarely attempted serious reform in these institutions; on the contrary, they generally tried only to make use of them for their own personal benefit. The Haiti of 1860 was radically different from the Haiti of 1791–1804, while 1915 closely resembled 1860. Only since the Occupation by American Marines has the process of change begun to accelerate again.

Most adjustments arrived at by a whole society occur unconsciously. Great leaders may suggest new ways for a nation to follow which break with the past and are clearly more progressive and rational than the old ways, but it is the people who eventually accept or reject the novelty. They perform, as people always and continuously do, an act of unconscious, automatic selection upon the variations, eliminating this one and adopting that for reasons often apparently irrational or prejudiced. The result of such a steady process of selection is a recognizable group of folkways and mores which make Haitian culture, for instance, distinguishable from the culture of other near-by islands, Cuba or Jamaica, for example.

It is not always a great man who suggests a variation in the folkways and mores, nor yet even an important personage like a cabinet

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[1] The term "social institution" is here used to mean a consistent pattern of folkways and mores clustering about a fundamental human interest.

minister or an outstanding intellectual. Variations are frequently 175
(some even say generally) mere casual accidents, surprising inspirations of the moment. 178 The changes which have come over the face of
the Vodun religion are examples: [77] in almost no instance can the additions or emendations be traced back to their originators, yet Vodun is clearly different now from what it was in Boyer's time. Just as no one knows who initiates a change in the folkway of language, coining a slang phrase, modifying a pronunciation, so the makers of most variations in folkways and mores are anonymous.

Given infinite time and patience, one might compile a list of mores in any country, beginning first with those which require absolute conformity from all persons, and running down to those which express social ideals but which may nevertheless be honored in the breach. In our own country, the mores condemning incest and cannibalism are not only our rules but our unanimous practice; and if a person breaks either we punish him severely. At the other end of our list are those mores requiring truthfulness and honor. In calling these American mores we pay homage to an ideal—and then tell our white lies as a part of the observance of social amenities, or make our "shrewd" business deals in order to get on in the world. For neither of these breaches of the mores is there any concerted social punishment; on the contrary, we have been known to praise those who broke them. In describing the culture of a society, therefore, it is necessary to report both the mores as ideal and the mores as practice.

The larger and more complex a society becomes, the fewer the 184
mores shared in common by all members of that society. In a small colonial American village, isolated from much contact with strangers, the whole population was bound by scores of mores touching all phases of life. In modern America, on the contrary, if one should consider American society as a whole it would probably be difficult to find a dozen mores shared commonly by us all, or if shared, exerting the same force to conformity. We have had to develop a measure of tolerance with our 130 million neighbors, a live-and-let-live principle which has been aptly called "antagonistic coöperation."

Each district in Haiti, in the effective isolation of illiteracy and sedentary life, has developed its own characteristic mores, of which a limited number correspond with those of other Haitian districts. It is these general correspondences which have been treated in this book. Within each district, likewise, there is the usual hierarchy of rules

184 ranging from those requiring strict observance down to those permitting latitude of behavior.

114 [121] It has, then, been the primary purpose of this book to show the gradual development (the word is used with no connotation of progress toward a conscious goal) of a consistent group of mores and social institutions in Haiti since the moment of her independence. The course of Haitian social history provides an almost unlimited opportunity for further study along the lines of contemporary American sociological research. Certain skeptics have pertinently criticized this sociology as narrowly provincial, calling it a social science limited only to the American scene, and valid consequently only for American society. Such a charge is precisely the reverse of that directed at European sociology, which finds congenial the development of philosophies of history independent of research in any specific field.

If the active American sociologist should extend his field of investigation he would, whatever his dominant interest, find much to reward his research in Haiti. For example, some of the most productive work in the United States has been in studies of neighborhoods,[2] communities,[3] and regions.[4] No neighborhood study has ever been made in Haiti, nor any regional study. Herskovits[5] has pointed the way to all future students of Haitian communities. Most research done by scholars in Haiti, however, has concerned itself with one or another of the social institutions (religion has been the most popular) rather than with thorough studies of individual communities.

For the social psychologist Haiti presents a rich and untouched field. It has the advantages of a limited geography and population, and so is less complex than the United States; yet Haitian problems are familiar enough to make comparison with American problems valid. Not only has there as yet been no investigation of the process of socialization, that is, of what happens to children as they take on

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[2] The neighborhood is generally defined as a primary group in society in which face-to-face contacts are frequent and intimate.

[3] The community is a group of people living in comparative proximity, sharing basic interests and activities, having relatively common usages and traditions, and acknowledging common rule.

[4] The region is a functional part of a larger area of economic, cultural, and geographical homogeneity. The Southeastern States of the United States are conceived as a region; in Haiti, the five departments are regions.

[5] In his *Life in a Haitian Valley*. This is a study of the community in and around Mirebalais.

114 the culture of their group, but also none of the broader aspects of the motivating forces, the dominant wishes, the attitudes and social values of the masses. Since the élite have often expressed in books their desires and frustrations, one feels that it would be readily possible for a trained social psychologist to learn much from upper-class informants who are anxious to be understood. To penetrate the inner life of the masses would be easier for an American than for a Haitian scholar, who would be enmeshed in the attitudes of class and caste in his own society.

565 Little has been said in this book of the small group of people, generally living in towns, who belong neither to the élite nor to the masses. How much actual social mobility occurs? Of the horizontal variety, that is, movement from place to place within the same social class, very little; of the vertical, or transition from one social class to another, there is likewise little, as has been shown at length in this book; yet there is enough to make a study of social mobility useful. Allied with such an investigation might be one of social distance. The degree of sympathy existing between élite and masses is small; on the other hand, one longs to know the degree of social distance of the individuals who are not yet élite but who regard themselves as definitely superior to the masses: what is their attitude toward the class they have left? And what is the attitude of the élite toward their aspirations?

114 Certain studies have already been made of the effect of the Vodun religion upon the personalities of its practitioners.[6] Even here the surface has been merely skimmed.

177 Haiti, because she is a colored nation in a white Western World, has been even more isolated than she would otherwise have been, even with her island position and her economic poverty. Except for the presence of American Marines for nineteen years there has been little cultural contact with outsiders, and hence little cultural conflict.
[563] It is generally estimated that there are not more than three thousand white people living in Haiti, and these mostly in the capital city. Throughout the nineteenth century it is likely that there were fewer. Haiti shares the island with the Dominican Republic, yet since the independence of the Dominicans in 1844 there has been little warfare, travel, or contact between the two peoples. Haitian workers have crossed the border, it is true, and have returned home (or have

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[6] See particularly Price-Mars, *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, and Dorsainvil, *Vodou et névrose*.

177 been murdered, as in 1937); and the Dominican influence can be seen in northeastern Haiti. The country as a whole, however, remains largely free from non-Haitian influence. This isolation may not continue for many more years, for successive administrations expand their health activities, try to improve economic methods, extend transportation facilities, and pursue policies of "enlightenment." Under such a regimen there will be an inevitable contact either with the experts from foreign countries or with the products of the civilization of those countries. And if Haiti should acquire foreign machines in large numbers, she would inevitably open herself to the dynamic influences which accompany a changing economy.

177 105 Such a possibility is in the near future, so that social scientists will shortly have the chance to observe cultural contact and diffusion at work. What is more immediately to the point is the query as to how much diffusion of cultural traits occurred at the beginning of Haitian national life. How much of the African tribal culture persisted through slavery and the period of forced labor into the Haiti of small properties and peasantry? How much, on the other hand, is a borrowing from the French ways of colonial times? These questions have been treated in earlier chapters, but may be here summarized. The external structure of social institutions, particularly those which characterize the life of the élite, is clearly French. Haitian government and law, upper-class marriage, the Catholic religion—all these have a French provenance. Conversely, among the masses, the Vodun religion and possibly certain economic devices (such as the coumbite) stem from Africa. Yet the round of daily life among the people is quite obviously unlike that of any single African group from which slaves were drawn, nor is it a composite of African folkways.[7] Similarly, although the bulk of the population is peasantry, the Haitian peasant is not at all a transplanted French peasant. The folkways and mores of rural Haiti are, to a degree unusual in most countries, products of local experience, uncolored by outside influence.[8]

157 Students of race find in writings about Haiti the usual sum of generalizations about the temperament and mental characteristics of

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[567] [7] It must be emphasized that the Haitian slaves were drawn from at least thirty-eight African groups. See J. G. Leyburn, "The Making of a Black Nation," in G. P. Murdock, ed., *Essays in the Science of Society* (New Haven, 1937), pp. 377–394.

[8] Herskovits' theory of the African origin of certain Haitian traits has been discussed above, pp. 199–201.

a whole people. The Negroes, as distinct from the people of lighter color, are genial or kindly or lighthearted, as white authors have often said American Negroes were. But are they? If so, how does it happen that people of a certain skin color have distinct mental traits? If the generalizations are false, how does it happen that the same characteristics have been attributed to Negroes in both countries? Are the distinctive temperaments of people in different nations merely imagined, or are they real? And if real, are they taken on as a part of culture or inherent in the blood? 157

The United States is gradually beginning to be aware of the republics which lie to the south of her. Haiti is not as large or important as her neighboring states, but more than many others her future depends upon this country. The sociologist will find her three million citizens worthy of study. 648

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NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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SV3 Haiti SV3

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NOTES

CHAPTER II

The period between 1789 and 1803 may be summarized as follows: 175

1789–1791. Struggle for precedence between whites and free colored people, with the balance in favor of the whites. [565]

1791–1793. The slave insurrection, with consequent anarchy, and futile attempts of French commissioners to restore order. Both whites and colored people pushed into the background. [669] [563]

1793–1796. Invasion of the colony by English and Spanish; rise of the mulatto general Rigaud and the black general Toussaint. [648]

1796–1799. Consolidation of power by Toussaint; defeat and expulsion of Rigaud; emigration of whites. [643]

1799–1802. Toussaint in full power as governor-general.

1802–1803. Leclerc's expedition, with its initial successes and ultimate failure. Final achievement of Haitian independence under Dessalines and Christophe. [642]

PART III

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Various efforts were made by American abolitionists working with Haitian presidents to colonize freed American Negro slaves in Haiti in the period before the Civil War.[1] All these projects came to unfortunate ends, some even to grimly tragic ones. During Boyer's time about 13,000 American Negroes went to Haiti, the government assigning to each family a portion of land upon its arrival. Very shortly most of those who could afford it returned to this country, and within ten years hardly one was still living upon the land. An American writer, Hunt, says that during his seventeen years in Haiti (before 1860) he had known of but 13 Negroes from America who had been moderately successful; of these, 7 were merchants or traders, 4 mechanics, and 2 lawyers; and all were mulattoes. Five others were barely independent, and all the rest were day laborers or worse. In spite of this, Hunt planned another aided migration of American Negroes to Haiti. Warning them not to expect too much in the way of improvements in agriculture, he adds a significant paragraph: "Should the immigrant obtain quiet possession of unoccupied lands, and begin to use the plough instead of the hoe, his new methods of culture would be likely to draw upon him the jealousy and ill-will of his neighbors. For when new ways are *too* new to be accepted as an example, they are very apt to be felt and resented as a rebuke. More than one of Boyer's old immigrants have told me that they were obliged to give up agriculture and take to trading in towns, on account of annoyances of this sort. They found their fences down, or their water let off, of a morning; or evidences that cattle had been fed on their grounds over night; or the neighboring idlers, of which there are many, had stolen ll their plantains and sweet potatoes, fit for the market. I do not mean to say that hese Haytian cultivators are worse than any other rude people. On the contrary, I

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[1] An excellent description of these projects is found in L. L. Montague, *Haiti and he United States, 1714–1938* (Durham, 1940), chap. IV.

175 563 believe they are less bad than many others in like circumstances. For not having great strength of character, they have neither great virtues nor great vices. The English farmers, Birkbeck and Flower, encountered similar troubles, and worse, when, forty years ago [that is, between 1820 and 1830], they brought over their English habits, and settled down with them among our farmers in Illinois."[2]

Montague sums up the general fate of American Negroes who migrated to Haiti by saying that some were exploited by the élite (who treated their own blacks in the same fashion), others persecuted by resentful peasant neighbors, and still others, who had expected manna to fall from the Haitian heaven, simply disillusioned at having to work, and so lost heart.[3]

CHAPTER XII

175 643 The following table of the presidents of Haiti summarizes in general the shifting political fortunes of the country. Those presidents who belonged to the élite caste are designated with an asterisk (*). It will be noted that the presidency has generally been in the hands of men from three departments: the North, where Negroes are predominant even among the leaders; the South, always a stronghold of the mulattoes; and the West, where the capital, Port-au-Prince, is located. The Department of the Northwest has never had a president, and the Artibonite only three. The color of the presidents is indicated.

Heads of State	*Color*	*Dates*	*Department*
1. Dessalines	Black	1804–6	North
2. Christophe	Black	1807–20	North
2. *Pétion	Light	1807–18	West
3. *Boyer	Light	1818–43	West
4. *Rivière-Hérard	Light	1843–44	South
5. Guerrier	Black	1844–45	Artibonite
6. Pierrot	Black	1845–46	North
7. Riché	Black	1847–47	North
8. Soulouque	Black	1847–59	West
9. *Geffrard	Dark	1859–67	South
10. *Salnave	Dark	1867–69	North
11. *Nissage-Saget	Light	1870–74	Artibonite
12. Domingue	Dark	1874–76	South
13. *Boisrond-Canal	Light	1876–79	South
14. Salomon	Black	1879–88	South
15. Légitime	Black	1888–89	South
16. *Hyppolite	Black	1889–96	North
17. Simon Sam	Black	1896–1902	North
18. Nord Alexis	Black	1902–8	North
19. Simon	Black	1908–11	South
20. Leconte	Dark	1911–12	North

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[2] Benjamin S. Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans*, pp. 14, 11.

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 71–72.

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Heads of State	*Color*	*Dates*	*Department*
21. Auguste	Light	1912–13	North
22. Oreste	Dark	1913–14	West
23. Zamor	Dark	1914	Artibonite
24. Théodore	Black	1914–15	North
25. Guillaume Sam	Black	1915	North
26. *Dartiguenave	Light	1915–22	South
27. *Borno	Light	1922–30	West
28. *Roy	Light	1930	West
29. *Vincent	Light	1930–41	West
30. *Lescot	Light	1941–	North

Summarizing this table, it can be seen that of the 31 heads of state only 13 have definitely belonged to the élite group. A few of the others might, by stretching the category, be regarded as members of this group. These 13, however, have governed for a total of 87 years, as compared with a rule of only 64 years by the representatives of the army clique. (It will be remembered that from 1807 to 1820 Haiti was separated and so had two heads of state.)

There have been 14 Negro rulers, 11 mulatto presidents, and 6 presidents who had at least a slight degree of white blood.

Of the 31, 13 represented the North (Christophe is included in this number, although he was born on the island of St. Christopher, from which he took his name); 8 came from the South; 7 from the West; 3 from the Artibonite; and none from the Northwest. The Northerners were in control of the government for 42 years; Southerners for 32 years; Westerners for 69 years; and the Artibonite presidents for less than 6 years.

CHAPTER XIV

1. *Taxation*

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The formative period of Haitian history, it is now evident, was between 1807 and 1820, when the young country was offered two sets of policies, generally opposed, to choose between: Pétion's and Christophe's. It is likewise clear that, since Pétion's required less discipline and self-restraint, and the country became reunited under Pétion's adoring secretary, Boyer, the easier path of Pétion was the one generally followed.

This choice is abundantly clear in the matter of taxation. Although the civil war between the two rulers was draining his treasury, Pétion either did not care or did not dare to tax his people. He relied rather upon heavy duties on trade in his ports, thus embarrassing commerce and taking away much of the profit from coffee. Christophe, on the other hand, without a scruple got millions by a tax on production amounting to one quarter of the annual crops of his kingdom;[4] consequently commerce in the North was free and that part of the island busy with prosperous trade. Christophe also taxed his nobles, charging a heavy fee for a patent of nobility, and also receiving annually a fourth of the crops raised upon their estates.

[4] Copied from the practice of Toussaint and Dessalines.

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175 Boyer carried on Pétion's policy of no taxation. It was not until the American
657 Occupation that Haitians could be said to be taxed. Ninety per cent of the state's
income between 1900 and 1915 regularly came from tariffs, and only ten per cent
[652] from internal taxes. Even the efforts of the Americans, resulting in the laws of 1924
and 1928, were on the whole restricted to a few excise taxes. A land tax was hopeless,
due to the utter confusion of titles and the stubborn impassivity of peasant
squatters.[5]

2. *Monetary Policy of Pétion and Boyer*

175 The monetary situation in Haiti was chaotic in its early days. The gold money
652 of France, Spain, England, and the United States circulated, as did small French
coins, and the coins and paper money created by the Haitian rulers, who had complete control over money. For example, Pétion decreed[6] an increase in the value of the *gourde d'Espagne* from 8 livres 5 sols, to 9 livres; of the French *écu* of 6 francs from 9 livres to 9 livres 15 sols; and the 5 franc écu from 7 livres 10 sols to 8 livres 5 sols; this almost doubled the value of money in circulation. He also struck small coins to replace the pieces of 30, 24, 15, 12, and 6 sols of France. His small coins were merely token money.[7] The paper currency created by Pétion and so easily counterfeited has been mentioned.

[433] Boyer was continually in financial perplexities. Production was declining while
expenditures had to be radically increased on account of the settlement with
France in 1825. Boyer's budget was not a large one judged by modern standards,
the average expenditure each year being about $5,000,000. To meet this, customs
duties on imports and exports brought in about $2,200,000 annually; territorial
duties on produce, houses, patents or licenses, market fees, and the like, a similar
[316] sum; but some half-million dollars had to be borrowed each year. The government
hoped to get something from developing mines in the Spanish part of the island,
[425] but this hope failed. It was thought also that the sale of government lands might
bring in some revenue, but few people wanted to invest money, when they had it,
[454] in land, with agricultural affairs developing as they were and no way of making
[465] people work: investment in trade was more promising. The national treasury was
so empty that both the civil and military officials were poorly paid. It was frequently
[661] said that almost all administrators and persons in authority were open to
bribery. Meantime the number of civil servants was increasing: there was a swarm
[647] of hirelings and subalterns in every commune, like a host of vampires. By their
lack of honesty, conscientiousness, and efficiency, immense sums were lost annually
to the treasury.

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[5] See the *Report of the American High Commissioner* (1929), p. 19.

[6] May 4, 1808.

[7] *Pétion voyant s'échapper de ses États les gourdes qu'effrayaient ses démêlés avec Christophe, eut pour les retenir l'ingénieuse idée d'y pratiquer une trouée. Ce moyen était trop efficace pour ne pas réussir, et il était trop simple pour que l'emploi n'en fut pas généralisé au moins par un équivalent. Ainsi, lorsqu'il en vint à battre monnaie, le chef de l'état du Sud descendit le titre de sa gourde à peu près au titre de la gourde espagnole tarée par son emporte-pièce. Il lui donne 858 millièmes de fin.*" Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, *Saint-Domingue*, II, 194.

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3. *Pétion, Boyer, and Inginac as Administrators*

Pétion lived very simply in the South, like a plain republican magistrate. He sat 175
on his piazza, accessible to all his people. He had a quiet way of answering his 643
opponents which did not make enemies of them. He made his secretary answer 159
every letter that arrived, no matter how small; many were simply inquiries about
the President's health. Yet the wars between Pétion and Christophe dragged on [669]
from 1807 to 1812,[8] draining the finances of the republic. Not only the crops
declined: so also did most of the public improvements instituted by the colonial [458]
planters; so did trade; so did habits of industry. Everything seemed to conspire [249]
against hard work. The rich plains of the Cul-de-Sac and the Artibonite Valley
were ravaged by fire and warfare; necessary equipment for sugar making was [464]
destroyed, the money for new machines and buildings was unavailable; and the
men were drawn away from their land by military duties.

Inginac, Boyer's secretary of state, after the Revolution of 1843 had got rid of both the President and his secretary, wrote his memoirs. There are some revealing passages. Inginac reports that Pétion told him only forty days before his death that Boyer was a man of probity and delicacy, "but unhappily he is petulant; he is too set in his ways to conciliate those who might assist him. In everything *he* wants to dominate, and he will bring unhappiness to the country if he does not change." [466]
Inginac cites cases to show that Pétion's prophecy was correct. Boyer in 1820 repealed the most unpopular laws, particularly those requiring personal corvée and the repair of public roads; but instead of taking advice from his cabinet on important economic matters, he frequently announced that he was president and would not be run by anybody. Consequently, according to Inginac, he made mistakes which might have been avoided.[9] Defending himself, the former secretary offers a clue to the failure of the régime—possibly unavoidable—by showing that the administration merely suggested, did not require, action:

"Have I not constantly, not only preached and corresponded about the necessity [464]
of making agriculture prosperous, but also given work at as high wages as the [214]
treasury could afford? Have I not created habitations on lands formerly totally
uncultivated, putting formerly idle men to work? Have I not published at my own [311]
expense, although I directed the National Printery, methods for cultivating tobacco
and coffee plants, of which I distributed gratis several thousand copies?"[10]

In spite of all encouragement which the administration could offer, agricultural 433
production continued to decline, while expenses increased, and external trade fell 439
off from a third to a half. The government had to borrow from the banking firm 652
of Lafitte in Paris to find even the interest for

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[8] Hostilities between the two parts of Haiti ceased about 1812 because of the [175]
mutual fear on the part of Christophe and Pétion of Napoleon's ascendancy, and the [669]
threat which this constituted to the whole former colony. Their war had ravaged the
plantations and removed laborers from the soil. Then came the War of 1812 between [648]
the United States and Great Britain, cutting off many of the supplies which Haiti
drew from both countries. There was accordingly an unwritten truce, with no further [728]
hostilities. A neutral territory of ten leagues between the boundaries of the two states
was tacitly agreed upon: neither army was to enter it. This was the rich plain of
Boucassin, once the garden of the island, now a wilderness.

[9] Joseph Balthazar Inginac, *Mémoires* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1843), pp. 32, 34, 38.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

payments due to the French government.

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(~~90~~0 of Lafitte in Paris to find even the interest for payments due to the French government.

4. *Exports from Haiti*

248 249 Sugar was the great crop of French colonial days in Saint-Domingue, with coffee, indigo, and cotton lucrative secondary crops. The first table shows the rapid decline of sugar, indigo, and cotton between 1791 and 1839, near the end of Boyer's administration.

CROPS

	Sugar	*Indigo*	*Cotton*
1791 (colony)	163,405,220 lbs.	930,016 lbs.	6,286,126 lbs.
1802 (Toussaint)	53,400,000	37,600	4,050,000
1804 (Dessalines)	47,600,000	35,400	3,000,000
1818 (Pétion)	1,896,449	0	384,001
1825 (Boyer)	2,020	0	815,697
1839 (Boyer)	6,000	0	1,602,792

245 By contrast coffee production, although it declined, remained large enough to provide the state with some income. After 1810 it was the principal crop of the country.

Coffee Production

1791	68,151,180 lbs.	1818	20,280,589 lbs.
1802	34,370,000	1825	36,034,300
1804	31,000,000	1839	43,854,666

439 In 1935–36 the Vincent government reported the export of 76,600,000 pounds of sugar, 79,400,000 pounds of coffee, and 12,700,000 pounds of cotton.[11]

CHAPTER XV

161 433 What Haiti faces, economically and socially, can be seen in terms of the law of population: "Population tends to increase up to the limit of the supporting power of the land, relative to the economic efficiency and to the standard of living of the people at the time." This law may be better visualized by stating it in terms of an equation:

$$\frac{\text{Population}}{\text{Productivity of land}} = \frac{\text{Economic Efficiency}}{\text{Standard of Living}}$$

Another way of stating the law is this:

Population ÷ Standard of Living = Productivity of Land ÷ Economic Effi-

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[11] These tables are compiled from material in Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description . . . de . . . Saint-Domingue*, passim; Great Britain Foreign Office, *Communications Relative to Hayti* (London, 1823), p. 159; Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Hayti*, II, 172 ff.; Alexandre Bonneau, *Haïti: ses progrès, son avenir* (Paris, 1862), pp. 35, 36; John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, p. 105; L.-J. Marcelin, *Haïti: ses guerres civiles* (Paris, 1892), p. 32; Charles F. Pressoir, "Pages de géographie économique," *Revue de la Société d'Histoire*, III, vi, 18; James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, pp. 318 ff.; *Rapport annuel du représentant fiscal d'Haïti*, October, 1935–September, 1936, pp. 189–195.

161
433

ciency. It is immediately evident that no one of the four variables can be increased or lowered without disturbing the balance.

In French colonial times, the white and colored population was but 68,000. This figure excludes all the Negro slaves. The land was highly productive. Economic efficiency was likewise high. Now, after a century and a half, the population is near 3,000,000, the land is wearing out, and economic efficiency is almost a negative quantity. The standard of living has obviously suffered tremendously as compared with that of the French planters and free colored people of colonial times. Even if it be protested that the comparison should rather be between early and modern Haitians than between upper-caste colonials and modern Haitians, we should still compare a population of 380,000 with one of 3,000,000 on just about the same amount of land, for what has been taken up by clearing away forests has been compensated for by erosion and reversion to waste. And as has been said economic efficiency has deteriorated.

If, then, the standard of living—the usual test of a people's prosperity and contentment—is to be raised, Haiti must:

a. Lower the birth rate, and so work on its population.

b. Rebuild and fertilize its soil (that is, improve its land).

c. Adopt machinery, learn scientific methods, apply intelligent management.

All three must be done seriatim or in combination. To foreigners, particularly to visitors from the United States, there is a moral imperative in the Haitian situation, a feeling that something ought to be done, and that right early. To Haitian peasants, on the other hand, "progress" would mean change, and change is an uncomfortable interruption of the familiar. Knowing this attitude, the Haitian government is not goaded into action.

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127 NOTE: When research was first begun upon the economic and social development of Haiti, permission was asked for an examination of Haitian Archives. The reply of the governmental official was cordial and frank. He remarked: "*Nos bouleversements politiques et de nombreux incendies ont occasionné la perte ou la destruction totale d'une partie appréciable des documents haïtiens. Et, il faut l'avouer, avec peine, nous n'avons jamais eu une organisation méthodique pour la conservation des pièces et documents officiels.*" Research in the Archives Générales de la République d'Haïti revealed the truth of the official's statement: there is practically nothing relating to nineteenth-century Haiti. Reliance had, therefore, to be placed upon contemporary accounts, some published, some in manuscript, rather than upon official documents.

Republic of Haiti

113 114 *Le Moniteur* (*journal officiel de la République d'Haïti*). This newspaper, begun on Feb. 8, 1845, is an excellent source of officially approved news and comment. Certain administrations during the course of the century have shown a genius, however, for cautious editing of news.

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HAITI (SAINT-DOMINGUE) BEFORE 1804

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NOTE: This list is by no means complete; it merely gives a fair sample of the works of imagination whose scene is laid in Haiti, early or modern.

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[p. 337]

INDEX

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INDEX

0-8-0

Affaire de Bizoton, 131–132, 142
Affranchis, 16, 17 ff., 36, 37–38, 98, 117–118, 177–178, 212, 265
African backgrounds, 3, 4, 38, 49–50, 72, 106, 126, 134, 135 ff., 141, 154, 162–163, 179, 185, 199–201, 202, 211–212, 300–301, 310
Agriculture, 85, 198–199, 203–204, 247, 259; under French, 14 ff.; under Toussaint, 27; under Dessalines, 34 ff.; under Christophe, 45 ff.; under Pétion, 57 ff.; under Boyer, 75 ff.
American Occupation, v, 93, 96, 99 ff., 191, 205, 223, 227–230, 232–233, 234, 240, 249, 266–267, 282–283
Amis des Noirs, 21, 22
Anthony, Saint, 147, 168, 171
Army, 34, 36, 48, 53, 68–69, 71, 79, 84, 89, 93, 101, 124, 235, 246–247, 248–249. *See* Overmilitarization
Arrondissements, 57, 61, 232, 235, 236
Artibonite, 12, 43, 74, 213, 317
Auguste, 222, 317

Baptism, 83, 116, 129, 150
Bocor, 157 n., 159, 161
Boisrond-Canal, 222, 316
Borno, 101, 228, 240–241, 317
Boyer, vi, 64–74, 75, 78, 79, 80, 81, 86, 88, 94, 97, 109, 122–123, 125–126, 140, 203, 213 ff., 223, 227, 234, 239, 242, 248–249, 255, 316, 317, 318, 319
Buccaneers, 14, 116, 298–299

Cacos, 103, 105, 226
Cap-Haïtien (Cap Français, Cap-Henry), 6, 10 n., 20, 22, 28, 64, 87, 123, 203, 219, 226, 235 n., 236, 251, 267, 280, 285
Caste and class, Part I, 8, 51, 79–87, chap. IV, 97–98, 106–110, 317
Cayes, Les, 10, 12, 24, 218, 219, 226
Charms, 159–161
Childbirth, 197, 276–277
Christophe, vi, 28–29, 31, 42–51, 52, 53, 60, 64, 65, 69, 75, 84, 85, 86, 87, 90, 94, 97, 109, 121–122, 139–140, 161, 183–185, 203, 205, 206, 213, 223, 225, 234, 238–239, 247–248, 253–255, 280, 316
Clothing, 5–6, 47, 206
Cockfights, 144, 296
Coffee, 14 ff., 55, 59, 77, 85, 87, 95, 104, 198–199, 204, 206, 250, 255, 256, 260, 317, 320
Coinage and currency, 51, 64 n., 65, 99 n., 102, 318
Code Henry, 50 n., 255
Code Noir, 16, 19, 116
Code Rural, 66 ff., 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 88, 96, 109
Commerce, 65, 85 n., 93, chap. XIV, 318, 320
Concubinage, 16, 184, 187–189
Constitutions, 42, 53, 82, 89, 104, 120, 221, 225, chap. XIII, 237–241, 243
Coöperative enterprise, 67, 77, 165, 199–200
Corporal punishment, 35, 41, 58, 59, 84, 248
Cotton, 34, 74, 85, 95, 250, 320
Coumbite, 165, 199–201
Courts, 50, 236–237, 243–245
Créole language, 5, 129–130, 168, 237, 279, chap. XVIII
Crop-sharing system, 57, 76–77, 87
Cul-de-Sac plain, 12, 274, 319
Custom and usage, 8, 60, 78

Dahomean influence, 135–137, 143–144, 146, 148, 167, 179, 200–201
Dahomets (police force), 47, 50, 86
Damballa (loa), 147–148, 169, 170–171
Dancing, 39, 68, 72, 133, 137, 139–140, 144, 153–154, 181, 296
Dartiguenave, 101, 228, 317
Dessalines, vi, 27 n., 31, 32–42, 43, 44, 45, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 60, 61, 65, 75, 84, 94, 97, 109, 118, 119, 121–122, 139–140, 180–182, 193, 212–214, 234, 237, 247–248, 250–251, 316
Disease, 102, 115, 161–162, 205, 272–277
Divorce, 119, 183, 185, 192

Domingue, 221, 224, 240, 316
Dominican Republic, 230, 231, 271, 309–310
Dwellings, 76, 85–86, 206–207, 292–293

Earthquakes, 86, 219, 257 n.
Economic organization, 34 ff., 44 ff., 57 ff., 317–320, Part IV
Education and illiteracy, 5, 11, 41, 49, 81, 87, 99 n., 116, 124, 224–225, 278–284
Élite, 4 ff., 9, 36, 81, 88 ff., 93, 97, 106–110, 129, 142, 185, 186–192, 215 ff., 227–230, 260–261, 278, 283–284, chap. XVI, 317
Empire, of Dessalines, 37, 238; of Soulouque, 92–93, 239
Erzulie (loa), 147, 148, 169
Exports and imports, 15, 317, 319, 320

Forced labor, 33 ff., 69, 70, 84, 87, 88, 94, 251
Foreign relations, 94–95, 100, 101, 223, 226–227, 250 ff., 265–267. *See* France, United States
Forts, 33, 247, 251, 267, 293–294
France, political relations with, v, 4, 70–71, 100, 110, 125, 215, 217, 260
Freebooters, 14, 116, 298–299
French Revolution, 15, 20
Funerals, 124, 155–156

Geffrard, 94, 99 n., 127, 222, 223–224, 230, 239, 277, 281, 316
Gens de couleur. See *Affranchis*
Geographical conditions, 3, 11–13, 290 ff.
Gonaïves, 80 n., 87, 194, 203, 219, 226, 235 n., 236, 280
Government, 211 ff., 227–231, chap. XIII, 235, 241–243, 316–317
Grands blancs, 16
Grazing, 67
Guadeloupe, 15, 303
Guerrier, 90, 94, 316
Guerrilla warfare, 29, 103, 105. See *Cacos*

Health, 102, 267, 272–277
Herskovits, vii, 151–152, 199–201, 308
Honesty, 47, 245
Hookworm, 86, 205, 273–274
Hospitals, 102, 273–277
Houngan, 137, 157, 160, 168, 304 n.
Hyppolite, 99 n., 223, 240, 316

Illegitimacy, 119, 120, 121, 181–182, 184–185, 198
Illiteracy. *See* Education
Immigration, 99 n., 247–248, 261–262, 315–316
Inginac, 38, 68, 78, 88, 123, 204, 213, 220 n., 242, 319
Insurrection of 1791, 15, 22, 23, 137–138, 226

Jacmel, 10 n., 87, 123
Jérémie, 6, 218, 226, 247 n.
Juge de paix, 57, 66–67, 68, 235, 236–237

Kingdom of Haiti, 43–51, 64, 121

Laissez faire, 42, 65, 185, 317, 319
Land, donations and sales, 75, 79, 94, 95; nationalization of, 37–39; ownership of, 71, 104, 105; policy of Pétion regarding, 53 ff., 63, 94; price of, 74
Laveaux, 23, 24, 26
Law, 4, 75, 287
Leclerc, 28–30
Legba (loa), 146–147, 148, 169
Lescot, 230–231, 317
Loa, 143, 144–146, 147 ff., 154, 157, 161, 169. *See* Rada and Pétro
Louisiana, 28 n., 30

Magic, 133, 136, 139, 158–165
Malaria, 86, 205, 273–274
Maldioque, 159–160
Markets, 196–197, 202–203, 256–259, 292
Marriage, 6, 61, 83, 98, 109, 116, 119, 121, 124, 177–179, 186 ff., 195–197
Martinique, 15, 28, 303
Medicine, 4, 272–277
"Middle" class, 36, 37, 83, 84 n., 93, 97–98, 99 n., 105, 107 n., 256, 309
Môle Saint Nicolas, 87, 227, 235 n., 266
"Mulatto," 3, 16, 39, 48, 79–80, 83, 101, 214 ff., 316–317. See *Affranchis* and Élite

Napoleon, v, 4, 27–30, 33, 118, 319 n.
Nissage Saget, 95, 222, 316
Nobility, 37, 44–45, 92, 214, 317

Nord Alexis, 100, 223, 28[illegible], 316
North, Department of the, 43, 50, 51, 74, 81, 103, 104, 106, 202, 213, 226, 254, 316–317

Overmilitarization, 37, 205, 232–233, 259. *See* Army
Overpopulation, 199, 268–271, 320–321

Peasants, 4 ff., 8–9, 51, 60, 74–79, 93–96, 97, 106–110, 142, 193–208
Pétion, vi, 3 n., 40, 42, 43, 48, 51–64, 65, 69, 75, 79, 86, 97, 110, 120–122, 140, 185, 186–187, 203, 213 ff., 223, 225, 234, 239, 248–249, 255, 280, 316, 317–319
Pétionville, 6, 194
Petits blancs, 16, 17
Pétro loa, 145–146, 147, 153, 169
Pierrot, 90–91, 221, 316
Plaçage, 187–191, 196–197
Plantation system, under French, 14 ff., 30, 68, 115–118; under Dessalines, 34 ff.; under Christophe, 45 ff.
Poison, 19 n., 89
Police, 71, 102, 234, 246. *See* Dahomets
Politics, Part IV, chap. XII, 225–227, 260, 316–317
Population, 3, 10, 18, 33–34, 62, 75, 84 n., 128, 193, 268, 269, 320–321. *See* Overpopulation
Port-au-Prince, 6, 10, 64, 71, 74, 87, 104, 123, 132, 194, 202, 219, 226, 229, 235 n., 236, 244, 245, 251, 267, 274–277, 285, 291, 292
Possession (Vodun), 143, 148–152
Priests, Roman Catholic, 115, 116, 118, 122–125, 127, 128, 195–196; Vodun, 157, 159. See *Houngan*
Property, 182–183. *See* Land

Race mixture, 16, 104, 108, 317
Race prejudice, 16–17, 18, 19, 20, 48, 62, 79–80, 81, 82, 103 n., 108, 189, 211, 226, 287–288
Rada loa, 145–146, 147, 153, 169
Railroads, 100, 102, 266, 294
Religion, 7, 83, Part II
Revolutions, 84, 88, 89, 90, 94, 100, 102, 108, 202–203, 216–218, 219–220, 226, 267, 319
Riché, 91, 142, 239, 240, 316
Rigaud, 24, 315
Rivière-Hérard, 89–90, 219–220, 316
Roads, 102, 105, 107, 207, 227, 267, 294–295
Rochambeau, 30–31, 54 n., 202
Roman Catholic Church, 4, 7, 83, 99 n., 113–114, chap. VI, 115–127, 134, 144, 156, 166–174, 195–196, 265, 281–282
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 103, 230, 240 n.
Roy, vii, 101, 117
Rum, 73, 85, 144, 257 n.

Sacrifice, 152–153, 161
Saint-Domingue, chap. II, 255, 299–300
Saint-Marc, 10 n., 87, 119, 226, 280
Salnave, 222, 239–240, 316
Salomon, 95–96, 99 n., 222, 240, 316
Sam, Guillaume, 100, 266, 317
Sam, Simon, 100, 316
Sans Souci, 43, 44, 280, 293
Santo Domingo, 24–25, 64 n., 67 n., 70, 90, 125, 172, 219, 220
Serfdom, 34, 44, 45, 50, 57, 60, 68
Sex relations, Part III
Sexual immorality, 42, 123, 178, 180–181, 198
Simon, 100, 316
Skin color, 3, 7, 39–40, 48, 79, 81–82, 129, 211, 285 ff., 311, 316–317
Slavery, 14 ff., 29–30
Société Congo, 199
Soulouque, 91–93, 126–127, 131, 141–142, 220, 223, 239, 316
South, Department of the, 43, 49, 90, 106, 213, 219, 226, 228, 254, 316–317
Squatters, 36, 56, 78, 96, 105
Standard of living, 6, 84, 87, 102, 269–270, 320–321
Sugar, 19 ff., 34, 55, 59, 60, 65, 73, 85, 95, 104, 250, 253, 255, 261, 320

Taxation, 45, 54–55, 105, 317–318
Tortuga (La Tortue), 14, 299
Toussaint L'Ouverture, vi, 24–30, 36, 43, 44, 52, 57, 60, 69, 118, 138, 139, 142, 179, 212, 234, 238, 315
Towns, 6, 10 n.
Tuberculosis, 205, 275–276
Twins, 154–155

400

United States, relations with, v, 27, 223, 227, 230–231, 250, 311. *See* American Occupation *and* Foreign relations

Vincent, 101, 103, 230, 241, 271 n., 317
Virgin Mary, 138, 143, 147, 169
Vodun (Voodoo), v, 7, 23, 72 n., 113–114, 126–127, 128–129, chap. VII, 133 ff., 166–174, 272, 277; "creed" of, 143 ff.

Wages, 46, 65, 68, 77, 319
Wealth, 6, 15, 17, 18, 62, 81, 82, 94, 116, 269, 318–321
Wesleyans, 120, 125, 265
West, Department of the, 43, 223, 316–317
Whites in Haiti, 82–83, 99–110, 108, 256
Women, 5, 45, chap. XI, 183, 190–192, 201–202, 204–206, 276–277, 290; preponderance of, 33–34, 205

Yaws, 273, 274–275
Yellow fever, 30, 115

Zombi, 156, 163–164

[p. 343 is blank]

564

[The information on the Haitian 'caste' organization, which the author discusses throughout the text, is here dealt with under category 565. See Mintz' introduction to the text (category 116) for the distinction between class and caste, as applied to Haiti. The concept of class (565) more closely and sharply defines the phenomena the author refers to in the text than does the concept of caste (564).]